

APPENDICES: SEVEN WRITINGS BY LEO STRAUSS

PRELIMINARY NOTE TO APPENDICES

Our appendices include seven writings by Strauss himself. Five may be found in their German originals in GS-2 and are now translated into English for the first time. Four of these were left unpublished: a review of Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie* (our appendix A);¹ lecture notes for two talks to young Zionist groups (our appendices B and C);² and a brief reply to an article by Herbert Finkelscherer on the medieval Jewish biblical exegete Isaac Abravanel's conception of politics and society, as regards Abravanel's critique of monarchy (appendix E).³ The fifth, on a lost writing by the medieval recoverer of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy Abu Naṣr al-Fārābī, originally appeared in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 80 (1936): 96–106 (our appendix D).⁴ The sixth is a newly edited and annotated version of Strauss's manuscript in English on "Exoteric Teaching"⁵ with supplementary materials gathered and introduced by Hannes Kerber (our appendix F). And the seventh is Strauss's notes for a lecture in English on "Persecution and the Art of Writing," also newly edited and annotated by Hannes Kerber (our appendix G).

Unless otherwise indicated, all footnotes in appendices A to E are the translators'. Footnotes followed by {LS} are Strauss's own.⁶ Footnotes followed by {HM} are

¹"Der Konspektivismus," GS-2 365–76, 620–21.

²"Religiöse Lage der Gegenwart," GS-2 377–92, 621; "Die geistige Lage der Gegenwart," GS-2 441–64, 623.

³"Zu Abravanel's Kritik des Königtums," GS-2 233–34, 615.

⁴"Eine vermißte Schrift Farābīs," GS-2 167–77, 614.

⁵A previous version, edited by Kenneth Hart Green, has appeared in *Interpretation* 14 (1986): 51–59; reprinted in *RCPR* 63–71.

⁶These are found mostly in "Eine vermißte Schrift Farābīs" and "Zu Abravanel's Kritik des Königtums." In our translations of these (in appendices D and E), Strauss's original footnote numbers have been freely altered to accommodate the addition of translators' (and editor's) footnotes.

Heinrich Meier's as editor of *GS-2*. All footnotes designated by Arabic numerals in appendices F and G are Hannes Kerber's. Those designated by Roman numerals in appendix F are Strauss's. About the editorial apparatus to appendix F in particular, see Hannes Kerber's Editorial Note.

Interpolations in square brackets are the translators'. Interpolations in parentheses inside titles or quotations from other authors are Strauss's. All emphases, whether inside or outside quotations, are Strauss's.

Page numbers that have been inserted into the translated texts of appendices A–E, inside curly brackets and in boldface, are to *GS-2*.

APPENDIX A

LEO STRAUSS: “CONSPECTIVISM” (1929)¹

Translated by Anna Schmidt and Martin D. Yaffe

Conspectivism, the greatest power within present-day philosophy, is not a “direction [of thought],”² as materialism, positivism, idealism, etc., are “directions [of thought].” It is, rather, a method or a style. In the previous century, the effort arose to dissolve philosophy into the history of philosophy. This effort is continued by conspectivism and transformed into a new effort. Both efforts presuppose that a naive, head-on attack on the problems has been overcome. This overcoming has its basis in the consciousness “that man ... after a development so long, full of sacrifice and heroic, has reached the highest stage of consciousness.”³ At this high stage, the attempt to solve the problems is out of the question. But while in the previous century one was still so naively reflective as to deny the problems altogether, conspectivism is full of the reflectively reflective knowledge that there are problems—hard, perhaps insoluble problems; it sees its very task in awakening and sharpening the sense of the problematic; but it does not itself solve the problems;

¹ [Leo Strauss, “*Konspektivismus*,” GS-2 365–75, 620–21.] Unpublished. Typescript of 13 pages with autograph entries and corrections in ink and pencil. Page 1 dated by Strauss in handwriting: “1929.” Leo Strauss Papers, Box 8, Folder 3, Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library {HM}.

Strauss’s essay is a book review (unpublished) of Karl Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1929). All page numbers in parentheses in Strauss’s text are to this volume (see note 4). Emphases in Strauss’s quotations from Mannheim are Strauss’s own.

The English translation, *Ideology and Utopia*, by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1936) is inexact and hence useless for helping readers understand Strauss’s criticism of Mannheim.

Strauss himself coins the term *Konspektivismus* with a polemical intention. In “Religious Situation of the Present” (appendix B), which appropriates words and phrases and even a full sentence from “*Konspektivismus*,” Strauss associates this coinage with three synonyms: the German *Zusammenschau* (“synopsis,” “overview”), the Greek σύνοψις, and the Latin *conspectio* (GS-2 382, with page 428, below).

² Strauss writes “*Richtung*” (“direction”). The German word “*Denkrichtung*” (“direction of thought” or “school of thought”) seems to be implied.

³ [Handwritten note in the upper margin of the typescript:] All citations derive from Mannheim’s *Ideologie und Utopie*. {HM}

it does not even attempt to solve them; but it keeps the option open to solve them in the future, perhaps in the near future, the next time, so to speak; in short, it replaces the solution of the problems and the denial of the problems by the wrestling with the problems.

The progress from naive reflectiveness to reflective reflectiveness has the result that philosophy creates for itself a new subject matter. Naively reflective philosophy dissolved into the history of philosophy; it dismembered the philosophies of the past; reflectively reflective philosophy occupies itself exclusively with the {366} philosophy of the present. Now the return to earlier standpoints is at times still indispensable even today; but the admirable division of labor that corresponds to the high stage now reached allows the thinker of the present to entrust to the historians the providing of access to the past. Let us take the example that a conspectivist spirit⁴ finds itself prompted to deal with the problem of utopia; it learns that Thomas Münzer is of very great significance for the history of utopia; the conspectivist spirit will then take up the pertinent literature, especially Holl's essay on Luther and the visionaries,⁵ and obtain from it an exhaustive knowledge of the facts of the case. This procedure is unobjectionable. For even if the limitedness of the historian compels us to be greatly suspicious about his *value judgments*, the historian's objectivity allows the user to gain a reliable overview of the *facts* from the documents drawn on by the historian. Meanwhile, as already indicated, the conspectivist thinker is only occasionally dependent on the historian; usually he occupies himself with present-day phenomena that need not be imparted by a third party. We can now attempt a first definition of conspectivism: conspectivism does not deal directly with the problems, as naive philosophy does; nor with the history of philosophy, as does naively reflective philosophy; but exclusively with the philosophy of the present.

The moment conspectivism constitutes itself, new horizons open up that were completely unknown to earlier generations. We point here only to the bottomless problematic that lies in conspectivism itself. We said that it concerned itself only with present-day philosophy. What happens if *all* present-day philosophers are conspectivist thinkers? This possibility does not bear contemplating; but that its realization is imminent is not to be doubted. If we see correctly, then the encounter and dialogue of conspectivist thinkers will become the theme and method of philosophy. But, as has been said, for now we are not there yet. For now, there are still a number of more naive spirits who deal with the problems directly. That is why for now the conspectivist thinker still has the possibility of concerning himself with naive philosophers, of moving back and forth among these philosophers. This movement is called dialectics. Dialectics is the preliminary stage of the encounter and dialogue, thus the preliminary stage to the stage at which the {367} conspectivist thinkers will be completely among themselves. Having reached this stage, the

⁴The German is *Geist*, which can mean either "spirit," "mind," or "intellect." As an adjective, *geistig* can mean "intellectual" or "referring to the intellect," as in Strauss's lecture title "The Intellectual [*geistige*] Situation of the Present" (appendix C).

⁵Karl Holl, "Luther und die Schwärmer," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* (3 vols.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), 420ff.

spirit will have reached its being in-and-for-itself; the truth of the spirit in itself will unveil itself in the conspectivist spirit. In the Socratic dialogue taking place among Graf Keyserlingk, Peter Wust, Arthur Liebert, Margarete Susmann et al., philosophy's initial situation is being recreated at a higher stage.

The victory parade of conspectivism is not to be slowed by reactionary spirits repeatedly shouting slogans like "To the things themselves!" "Back to the sources!" etc. Imbued with the consciousness that everything effective at present is of equal value, conspectivism incorporates thoroughness dialectically into its own position; it transforms the naive thoroughness into a thoroughness of a higher order. The fact that even the conspectivist thinkers raise the demand for philological precision and methodological exactness shows clearly how comfortably thoroughness can be integrated into conspectivist thinking.

Since these remarks have the purpose of introducing the reader to conspectivism, this may be the right moment for some brief information about the most natural mode of access to the conspectivist writings. The novice should not be deterred by all the talk about wrestling in these writings; he must keep in mind that wrestling can be a beautiful, indeed a graceful, gesture. He best begins by reading the literary and entertainment supplements included in the widely distributed democratic newspapers. Here he becomes acquainted effortlessly with the first concepts; he thus spares himself the time-consuming detour via the naive problems and via the history of philosophy; he learns how positions that took a decade or longer to establish are overturned or even dispensed with within a few minutes by a few clever moves, using dashes, question marks, and exclamation points; in this manner he understands from the start the powerful progress in technical thinking that the conspectivist methods have brought; he learns to apply these methods himself without difficulty. Trained in this way, he advances to the reading of conspectivist periodicals, pamphlets, and books; these writings he easily recognizes by titles such as: "Currents of Present-Day Thought"; "New Ways of (or to) Philosophy"; "Spirit and World of Dialectics"; "The Resurrection of Metaphysics"; "Thinkers of the Time"; etc. Once he has educated himself with the help of these classic works, he can then turn to the precon-spectivist writings and gradually apply himself to {368} processing them dialectically by writing essays, pamphlets, and books.

If a naïf has, with strenuous labor, gained a concept for himself, has thought it through to the end "with unsparing ruthlessness even toward himself," has put his thoughts on paper, and, finally, published them for whatever reasons, then anyone is free to read his book. How someone reads it depends on what kind of human being he is. If he is narrowminded and has a "categorical apparatus" at hand, then he will cast the book aside: as "metaphysical," if he is a positivist; as "psychological," if he is a Neo-Kantian; as "un-existential," if he is an adherent of the religious-metaphysical renewal movement. But if he is open to everything new, if he is hence predestined for conspectivism, then he notices that the book contains a word of the future. In this case—and this case alone is of public interest—the following will then happen: the attentive reader incorporates the new word into his vocabulary; he reads other books, of which one or the other may be as significant as the first book taken as our example; in these books he also encounters new words that he incorporates; his philosophy becomes more and more universal; effortlessly he overcomes the

onesidedness of the various naifs. Of course he reflects on the various keywords and catchwords; he notices connections; he sits down and writes; the result of such a wrestling is a synthesis, that is, an essay or a pamphlet or a book in which the various words are combined dialectically. The dialectical combination of the keywords and catchwords of present-day philosophy—this and nothing else is conspectivism. That is why conspectivism is no standpoint, but rather a method; more exactly, it is a literary genre. Those books are conspectivist in which validity, value, Gestalt, stream of life, dialectics, the existing thinker, the conditions of production, Weltanschauung, structure, ontology, etc., etc., move in a bacchantic whirl.⁶

In order to write such books, one needs a peculiar style. Characteristic of the conspectivist style are, for instance, sentences containing a “without”; one would write, say: “without underestimating the great significance of Hegelianism, one will have enough of a critical conscience to concede that this philosophy does not fully satisfy the demands of an existential worldview.” Also, adjectives ending in *-haft* are necessary in conspectivist prose; while the naïf uses the {369} adjectives ending in *-haft* only in words like *fabelhaft* or *grauenhaft*,⁷ etc., it is the concern of the conspectivist author to develop “*gestalthaft*,” “*bildhaft*,” “*raumhaft*,”⁸ etc., for everyday use. These indications may suffice for now. Let me just add that the conspectivist style has exercised a fruitful effect on the language of the educated. If a merchant, judge, or physician because of his attitude somehow finds himself incapable of opting for a certain worldview, or if he somehow finds a metaphysical grounding in absolute values to be required, then he owes the possibility for this to the conspectivist authors.

Only now, “*ex post*,” has Karl Mannheim developed the program of conspectivism long dominating the practice of philosophic authorship.⁹ What is better called conspectivism, he calls “dynamic synthesis.” One would do Mannheim an injustice if one were to describe him without qualification as a conspectivist thinker. In his book *Ideology and Utopia* (here being reviewed) one finds a whole number of naive remarks stemming from direct contact with the problems that still await conspectivist reworking. Mannheim’s book is to be counted among the conspectivist literature not so much because it is itself conspectivist in form, but because, as already said, it develops the program of conspectivism for the first time. That is why we have to take a different position toward it than toward the properly conspectivist literature; we shall therefore review it not on the basis of conspectivism, but on the basis of naive thinking and in naive seriousness.

Mannheim’s book, which beckons the reader with its interesting subjects—the three treatises of which it consists are titled “Ideology and Utopia,” “Is Politics as a Science Possible? (The Problem of Theory and Practice),” “The Utopian Consciousness”—is daunting at first for its wealth of technical expressions, arousing

⁶Strauss’s German sentence reads: *Konspektiv sind jene Bücher, in denen die Geltung, der Wert, die Gestalt, der Lebensstrom, die Dialektik, der existierende Denker, die Produktionsverhältnisse, die Weltanschauung, die Struktur, die Ontologie usw. in bacchantischem Tummel sich bewegen.*

⁷*Fabelhaft* means “fabulous”; *grauenhaft* means “dreadful.”

⁸These terms mean something like “Gestalt-like,” “image-like,” and “space-like.”

⁹The German is *Schriftstellerei*, which can have the pejorative meaning of “scribbling” (in the sense of “hack writing”).

admiration and fear. It just teems with “structural,” “categorical apparatus,” “outlook,” “situation,” “synthesis,” “deliberation,” “ontology,” etc. This expenditure of technical terms would be tolerable, perhaps even necessary, if it were in the service of conceptual precision. But an expression such as “categorical apparatus” is precisely *not* possible strictly speaking. Why Mannheim embellishes the word “decision,” which has long been recognized and accepted as a technical term {370}, with the epithet “ontological,” why he says “lived ontic” instead of “life,” remains unintelligible so long as one has not yet noticed how little precision there is in Mannheim’s writing in general. He speaks of a sociological—that is, social-*scientific*—link (137) when he should speak about a social link at most. He speaks of the solution of a synthesis (122) when he means the solution of the task to produce a synthesis. Ellipses of this sort do not become more tolerable by being counterbalanced with pleonasms such as “in the truly ultimate end” and “unsparing relentlessness.” When Mannheim says, “It could not...be our task *this time* to solve problems once and for all,” one would like to call out to him: “but next time, please.” But in doing so one has to be prepared that what will matter to him next time is being right; for he declares programmatically that he does “not” want “to conceal” the “contradictions, for being right does not matter *for now*” (5). A sentence such as the following highlights his syntax: “For magical times one would of course not be so intellectualist as to assume that on account of epistemological considerations the magical ‘system of order’ has disappeared...” (57). “*on a completely new manner*” (124)¹⁰ is also not quite impeccable grammar. “*Chairos*” (201) is presumably formed from *Kairos* by analogy with *Chaos*–*Kaos*; the fact that the word is emphasized in print, and therefore could not easily be overlooked on a proof-page, speaks decisively against the hypothesis that we are dealing with a printer’s error. The enumeration of the formal shortcomings of Mannheim’s book could be continued indefinitely; the examples cited will suffice to justify the assertion that reflects one’s first impression: that this book has not been written with the requisite care. Yet this is, if you will, the author’s business only. It is the reader’s task to keep to what is worthy of attention, something that can be found in the book nonetheless. Worthy of special attention are *the* thoughts of Mannheim’s, which may be summarized as follows.

The fact that there are various, opposing philosophical and political parties incapable of convincing one another was also known previously, under quite different conditions than today. But previously this fact was interpreted differently than it is today. Previously one drew from it, for instance, *the* consequence that prior generations had chosen a wrong approach, that it was therefore necessary to take a new path to *the* {371} truth, the truth valid for all human beings and times. One put a new system in place of the existing systems, which might have fundamentally differed as to method and form from the previous systems but which was for that reason no less—a system. This possibility no longer exists today. The lasting insight of the 19th century is the insight into the historical and social conditionality of all systems: there is no free-floating thought, all thought is bound to *its* historical and social place. But

¹⁰ Strauss’s point is that this phrase is grammatically incorrect. Mannheim writes “*auf einer ganz neuartigen Weise*,” which is in the dative, whereas the preposition *auf* in this idiom should take the accusative: “*auf eine ganz neuartige Weise*.”

does not knowing thereby lose its meaning? No—it merely fundamentally changes its meaning. It gives up chasing the chimera of timeless truths; it understands that its meaning lies in understanding the present, present-day life, the social situation from which it stems. The place of metaphysics is taken over by the “sociological diagnosis of the time,” the “analysis of the situation,” the “report on the situation.” This science grows out of the understanding of ourselves and our world that is given with our life itself; it unfolds when we question the particular and narrowminded viewpoint that we hold initially with the other, equally partial and narrowminded viewpoints that are effective in the same social and historical space. In carrying out this confrontation we are on the way to the only possible totality, to the total understanding of our situation. At every moment, we must guard ourselves against the previously gained insight’s positing itself as absolute, against our fleeing into a system that reassures us by blocking the horizon from us. The inclination to such absolutizing is admittedly given with human nature, with our thinking and acting. “But this is precisely the function of historical research...in our epoch, to keep rescinding these inevitable...self-hypostasizings and to keep relativizing the self-deification in a constant countermovement, thereby forcing us to be open to the addition” (40).

At this point the question becomes urgent to the reader: how indeed is the addition supposed to happen? Mannheim answers: through the other *present-day* viewpoints. But who says that an adequate understanding of the present situation is indeed achieved through the “dynamic synthesis” of viewpoints, however successful, which exist at present? Can the possibility be ruled out from the start that all these interpretations may be blind to the same fundamental facts; that one thus never even encounters these fundamental facts if one orients oneself from the beginning only by these viewpoints? {372} Mannheim presupposes further that the various present-day viewpoints are *equivalent* (40: “now there are too many equivalent positions, even intellectually equally powerful ones, which mutually relativize themselves...”). His proof of this equivalence is that from each of these positions one sees facts that one does not see, or at least does not see *in that way*, from the other positions. But are all facts equally important? Are all aspects equally radical? What determines importance and radicality? The totality! Now Mannheim assumes that only that viewpoint is total that as a “synthesis” does justice to all the others. But can it be ruled out from the start that the total viewpoint might be supremely “unjust”? In order to know which facts must be at the center of a total viewpoint, one must know which facts *are* central; but one does not come to know this by pitting the viewpoints dominant at present against one another. Here Mannheim’s premature judgment of Ranke’s “obliviousness”¹¹ (63) comes back to haunt him; Ranke said: “All the heresies of the world will not teach you what Christianity is—one can come to know it only by reading the Gospel.” This sentence is neither naive nor ominous, but simply true. If one understands that thought is conditioned by the situation, it does not follow that one cannot come to see the situation originally, free of the dominant viewpoints. This freedom does not fall into anyone’s lap; it must be won by understanding the tradition as such in which we are caught up. Admittedly, this tradition cannot be seen clearly

¹¹ Ger.: *Ahnungslosigkeit*. In Strauss’s next sentence, “oblivious” is *ahnungslos* and “ominous” is *ahnungsvoll*.

if—as Mannheim does throughout—one orients oneself only by the more recent centuries. When Mannheim takes premodern developments into consideration, then only “traditionalism” in contrast to modern “rationalism,” the “medieval-Christian objective unity of the world” in contrast to the “Enlightenment’s absolutized unity of the subject,” or at the most the “magical system” and “the prophets”: in Mannheim’s book, which poses the question of the meaning of science, specifically of the possibility of politics as a science, the foundations of our scientific tradition which lie in Greek antiquity are forgotten! Of all people it is *Mannheim*, who desires and hopes that the history of word meanings “will be researched at the level of methodological exactness possible at present” (38), who is guilty of this omission. {373}

But let us disregard the lack of “methodical exactness,” of “philological precision” (1), this failure to answer demands that Mannheim himself makes; let us further suppose that in fact every analysis of a situation that is possible in that situation is “somehow” a “synthesis” of the extreme positions effective in this situation: is it permissible therefore to make this *fate* of all research into the *principle* of research? Mannheim speaks of the danger that lies in the “false contemplation of the researching stance” vis-à-vis political practice. Well—the same danger exists vis-à-vis scientific practice. Mannheim, who at many points is brushing the outer limits of liberalism—by incorporating illiberal elements into the liberalism that in fact has a hold on him by means of a “dynamic synthesis”—does not in truth overstep these limits. (Particularly interesting in this respect is Mannheim’s interpretation of fascism, which we cannot enter into here.) We say: liberalism has a hold on Mannheim, and we are justified inasmuch as it is the essence of liberalism to elevate insights gained in a contemplative attitude to principles of practice.

The “analysis of situation” sought by Mannheim does not want to be “value free.” It is aware that the will to know *what is*, this will that forbids every escape and every lie, contains a “value judgment”; that given with our life already, from which this situation analysis arises, are valuing, taking a stance, praising and blaming; that it is possible only on the basis of a “decision” guiding the eye, illuminating the horizon. This “decision” stands at the beginning; not, however, as an axiom from which anything one likes can be inferred, but as an implicit drive to question, which becomes explicit, understood, tested, and doubted in carrying out the confrontation. Thus, the analysis of situation that is always grounded in a “decision,” succeeds in the unveiling of ideologies by showing for what they are “outdated and outlived norms and forms of thought, but also worldviews” that do not clarify the present situation but conceal it (51). A “decision” underlies the “sociological diagnosis of the time” that seeks a “dynamic synthesis,” and in particular underlies the “politics as science in the form of a political sociology” (143) also demanded by Mannheim, namely, the decision for a politics of the center, whose support is to be the “socially free-floating intelligence.” The {374} stratum of intellectuals that is—according to Mannheim’s thesis—the support of the “spirit” is the “predestined advocate of the intellectual interests of the whole.” This stratum is not a class; it owes its unity not to its economic situation but to “education.” The intellectuals, who as individuals are conditioned by class and always remain within certain limits, have in their education “a homogeneous medium” in which the heterogeneous class tendencies can confront each other; the intellectual struggle made possible by education is a

“downsized image” of the class struggles. The result of this confrontation is expected to be a “total orientation” about the social situation, as it cannot be reached from the extreme standpoints of classes and parties; but not a “politics peculiar to intellectuals,” which would hardly be possible in the time of mass movements. The stratum of intellectuals has the possibility and the “mission” of anticipating intellectually and thus beginning a “dynamic mediation” between the classes opposed to each other, between the “ruthless representatives of yesterday’s principles” and the “one-sided emphasis on the day to come” (121–34). We leave undecided whether this type of influence on politics is possible at all in the present situation; we only point out an allusion that Mannheim makes in the context of his treatise on politics as a science,¹² an allusion whose momentousness is deplorably at odds with how little it is developed. We recall the significance of the distinction between an ethics of intention and an ethics of responsibility for Max Weber.¹³ Unless we are mistaken, the insight into this distinction was the deepest and strongest motive for his conviction that it is impossible to decide scientifically between opposing moral principles; for here two irreducible, unjustifiable, unconditional possibilities of human behavior seemed to face each other, compelling each human being to face an either/or. There is no doubt: Max Weber faced *this* choice. Are we still facing it today? If we comprehend correctly the remark that Mannheim makes at the conclusion of his second treatise,¹⁴ then he is of the opinion that the ethics of intention is no eternal possibility, but *one* stage in the history of humanity, destined to be overcome by the ethics of responsibility that Max Weber professed. But if that is the case, is not the meaning of “decision” fundamentally changed? Do not then the questions that Mannheim asks himself have to be asked entirely differently? This question leads back to the {375} more fundamental question of how the world in which science emerged looked before the incursion of the biblical consciousness. Only by orienting ourselves by this world can we gain the horizon in which alone we can radically question and answer henceforth. In orienting ourselves by this world we would also see that, under Mannheim’s implicit presuppositions, one would have to inquire not into the possibility and necessity of utopia, but into the possibility and necessity of planning. But Mannheim utterly lacks precisely this orientation.

¹²I.e., in “Is Politics as a Science Possible? (The Problem of Theory and Practice).”

¹³See Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 120: “We must be clear about the fact that all ethically oriented conduct may be guided by one of two fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims: conduct can be oriented to an ‘ethics of intention’ or to an ‘ethics of responsibility’ [‘gesinnungsethisch’ oder ‘verantwortungsethisch’ orientiert]. This is not to say that an ethics of intention [Gesindeethik] is identical with irresponsibility, or that an ethics of responsibility [Verantwortungsethik] is identical with unprincipled opportunism. Naturally, nobody says that. However, there is a gaping contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of an ethics of intention—that is, in religious terms, ‘The Christian does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord’—and conduct that follows the maxim of an ethics of responsibility, in which case one has to give an account of the foreseeable results of one’s action.” Translation modified. See Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1971), 551–52. Cf. also NRH 69ff.

¹⁴I.e., of “Is Politics as A Science Possible? (The Problem of Theory and Practice).”

APPENDIX B

LEO STRAUSS: “RELIGIOUS SITUATION OF THE PRESENT” (1930)¹

Translated by Anna Schmidt and Martin D. Yaffe

I would be facing an insoluble task if I had to report to you all that is being *written* about religion today; for *infinitely much* is being written: each day a new book, a new pamphlet, a new essay comes out concerning our question. The task would be simplified—and the simplification in our case amounts not so much to the temptation to give in to laziness as to an imperative of reason—if I limited myself to reporting what was being *thought* today, being thought *thoroughly*. For while there are many who write, there are few who think, who think thoroughly. I do not mean to claim that a necessary opposition exists between thinking and writing, although that claim might not be all that indefensible. I am happy to admit that there are a number of men who write after they have thought, have thought thoroughly. We need to concern ourselves with these men only.

Meanwhile a further restriction recommends itself. Most of even the thorough authors are apostles of a master. And here we keep to the proverb: “One does not go to the apprentice, but to the blacksmith.” It is indisputable that the kind of literature that advances the understanding of a great and deep mind, commentary, has a value that should not be disparaged. But the commentator is not the author. And in concerning ourselves with the religious situation of the present we do not want to become confused by the multitude of commentators, but to stick to the very few authors, to the *auctores* of the situation. {378}

We are interested in the religious situation of the present as *Jews*. For that reason we take a stronger interest in those authors who, being Jews, determine the present

¹ [“*Religiöse Lage der Gegenwart*,” in GS-2 377–91, 621.] Unpublished. Manuscript with 13 handwritten pages and inscribed cover, in ink with penciled supplements and corrections. On the cover Strauss has noted under the title: “Paper to be read on 21 December 1930 in the Kadimah Federation Camp in Brieslang near Berlin.” Leo Strauss Papers, Box 8, Folder 4, Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library. {HM}

Kadimah was a national student Zionist organization founded in Vienna in 1882 (and disbanded by the Nazis in 1938). Its Hebrew name means “Forward.”

situation. Of the Jewish writers of the present who are of interest in our context, the most important one by far is without any doubt Franz Rosenzweig.² I will therefore confine myself to a presentation of Franz Rosenzweig's doctrine. In the short time that I have, I would only cause confusion by giving a survey of the various theories. The thorough treatment of a work that is indicative of and peculiar to the present situation is much more suitable for our purpose.

However, I cannot even turn to my task limited in this limited way, I cannot begin my thus limited task in the right manner, so long as I have not clarified the topic itself. In this clarification it will turn out, however, that the topic is *not a serious* topic. That is why I divide my presentation into 2 parts:

1. Clarification of the topic;
2. Rosenzweig's doctrine and its difficulty.

The title of my presentation consists of four words—rather, since we can safely disregard the article “the,” of three: “Religious,” “Situation,” “Present.” We want to look at these three words in sequence in their context as determined by the topic.

1. *Religious Situation of the Present.* Obviously this does not mean in one particular respect: in the way that we can consider the situation of the present as conditioned by the Versailles Treaty, by the crisis of the world economy, by the Balfour Declaration, etc.; nor that the religious situation of the present is of the same order as the political, social, economic, technical, scientific, artistic situation. Instead what is meant is: the situation of the present in the *most important* respect. It is, for instance, unthinkable that the topic of your study group, the validity of norms, values, and laws, would *not* belong to our topic; rather, it essentially belongs to it. For that reason, for example, the philosophic situation should not be distinguished and excluded from the religious situation; but certainly the only reason why you did *not* say “*philosophic* situation of the present” was because otherwise there would have been the danger of letting loose a flood of incomprehensible technical terms. Avoiding this will be my most pressing concern. But the matter prohibits disregarding philosophy, {379} prohibits distinguishing between religion and philosophy in looking at the present religious situation. I therefore replace “religious situation of the present” with “*intellectual*³ situation of the present.”

2. *Intellectual Situation of the Present.* The expression is intelligible but inappropriate:⁴ the intellect is not a thing that is situated, or that could have a situation. The intellect is actual⁵ in seeing and searching, in believing, wishing and hoping, in demanding and giving an account, in responsibility, in questioning and answering. Now, questioning has priority over answering. God does not *question*,

² Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), German-Jewish theologian, originator of the “new thinking” and leading advocate of the “movement of return” to Judaism; see Strauss, Preface to *SCR*, in *JPCM* 146–48 with 151–53, 453, 460.

³ Ger.: *geistige*. (The emphasis is Strauss's.)

⁴ Ger.: *uneigentlich*. Or: inauthentic. Likewise five sentences later in this paragraph. In that same sentence, “proper” is *eigentlich*, whose range of meanings includes “real,” “actual,” “true,” “appropriate,” and “authentic.”

⁵ Ger.: *wirklich*. Or: real.

although he does answer. Questioning is more characteristic of the human intellect than is answering. There is no answer without questioning,⁶ although there is questioning without answer. It may be that questioning is not the sufficient definition of the intellect—in any case, questioning is proper to the intellect and not, like the situation, inappropriate. We therefore now say: the intellectual *questioning* of the present. This expression has a pleonastic effect: although we speak of “the social question,” we do not speak of social questioning, etc. We therefore say: *the* questioning of the present. The questioning asks something; it asks a question;⁷ we grasp the questioning of others—in this case, of the present—from their question. We therefore say: *the* question of the present.

3. The Question of the *Present*. Let us imagine, in a fanciful manner, a Kadimah camp assembly in the twelfth century, in the century of R[abbi] M[oses] b[en] M[aimon],⁸ and that you had asked a student of the RMbM to speak to you so that he might help you, by means of what he has learned from his teacher, to free yourselves from your confusion and perplexity. What would he have spoken to you about? Creation, providence, the unity of reason and revelation. Hence, about *substantive* questions. In another age, one would probably have spoken about *other* questions, but always about substantive questions. Nobody would have minded whether or not they were questions of the *present*. At the time, they *were* questions of the *present* that were being dealt with, but they were not being dealt with *as* questions of the present. When we question, seriously question, we then *by that very fact* ask questions of the present. And if we pose *the* question that we are certain is *the* question, then we are asking *the* question of the present. We will therefore cross out “of the present” and say: *The* question. There can, however, be no doubt about what *the* question is that is and must be the most important one for us: it is the question, what is the *right* life? how *should* I {380} live? what matters?⁹ what is needful?¹⁰ Thus, our modern topic of the “religious situation of the present” boils down to the old, eternal question, *the* primordial question.

There is no doubt that this is the question for the sake of which you have posed the question concerning the religious situation of the present. For in order to learn the latest from the realm of intellect and wit, you did not need to travel from noisy Berlin to quiet Brieselang. But how does it come about, then, that the simple question poses itself not only to you but also to the present as such, as the question of the religious or intellectual situation of the present? This automatic alteration of the question takes place on account of an implicit or explicit, but in any case tyrannical, conviction: the conviction that the answer to the question could be gained solely or essentially from the knowledge and understanding of the present as it exists in the present. This conviction and its causes we have to consider first.

⁶ Or: questions.

⁷ Ger.: *Das Fragen fragt etwas, es fragt eine Frage*. Strauss's sentence has a Heideggerian formulation.

⁸ “RMbM” is the traditional Hebrew acronym for Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (i.e., Moses Maimonides). We have retained it here, along with Meier's bracketed interpolations. The acronym recurs in Strauss's next clause and later on.

⁹ Ger.: *worauf kommt es an?*

¹⁰ Ger.: *was tut not?*

If we pose the question concerning the right life unselfconsciously and naively, convinced that we can answer it if we make an honest effort and do not let ourselves be put off by any detour, then the present,¹¹ attired in the most splendid robes, confronts us with the raised eyebrows of a haughtily knowing, exalted personage and calls out to us:

Stop! You unsuspecting ones! Do you not know that the inexhaustible earth brings forth new generations year after year, which, barely having reached maturity, are all destined to charge with all the fire of youth directly at the truth, at *the* truth? This has now been happening for thousands of years. For thousands of years the attempt has been made, and time and again it has failed. At one time, later generations did not let themselves be confused by the failure of earlier ones; full of delusion they said to themselves, if they failed—perhaps they approached the issue the wrong way; let's just begin from the beginning; let's begin completely from the beginning. And they began from the beginning, and they also failed. The unhappy ones did not know—what I, the Present, the powerful goddess, know—that they *had* to fail. They had to fail since they were seeking *the* truth. For there is not *the one eternal* truth, but each age has *its* truth, and you, you 20-year-olds, you can reasonably seek only your truth, the truth of your age, my—the present's—truth. Being in full possession of *this* knowledge, which is {381} my greatest pride, I am allowed to smile at the past—at its naivety. I do not hide that my smile conceals a little *envy*: at the élan of youth, which, in the superiority that my knowledge gives me, I cannot permit myself: the long, magnificent robes that strike your eye would hinder me very much in an assault on the truth, which can only be dared in combat gear; I cannot go on the assault: I am stuck at the base; I do not hide that I am sometimes ashamed before the frontline soldiers; but then my good sense tells me: “You have no reason to be ashamed; the base is *your* virtue, *your* duty; you would be dishonest, you would be betraying yourself, if you, such an exalted, superior, refined personage, were to take on the dirt and hardship of the front lines. I have it much harder, since I, too, would rather go on the assault and cannot and must not.”—So, while my smile is not a naive smile at their naïveté, and is indeed a smile that is not without grief and shame, it is, at the same time, also not a poisonous smile: My smile is benevolent: I exculpate, I *justify*: I exculpate the earlier generations since they did against their will what I prescribe to my children. To be sure, they did seek *the* truth, but they found the truth without time;¹² they failed—measured by *their* standard; measured by *my* standard, they reached the goal. So now, enthroned high above the entire past, I call out to you: It is befitting for thinking beings to know what they are doing and what they can reasonably want: therefore, know and be imbued with it once and for all, that you can find only your truth, the truth of the present, and therefore can reasonably seek only it.

In this way the present speaks a lot to us, not through the mouth of stubborn goats in Scotland¹³ but through the mouth of the most agile, most progressive, most expert, most lively children of our time. So let us hear more closely what they are saying to us. We cannot seek *the* answer to our question, but only the answer for *us*, for the *present*. But where and how to find this answer? Surely not in the

¹¹ Or: the Present. Likewise in the following.

¹² Ger.: *ohne Zeit*.

¹³ This expression seems proverbial, with no literary antecedent.

study. No—only through coming to know the *powers* of the present! Where do we encounter these powers? In the struggle of parties, groups, trends, currents, etc. But are we supposed to hear what the truth of the present is from the cacophonous noise of the public? No—these conflicting trends do not harmonize on their own; their harmony {382} must first be produced by us. In what manner, though? The thoughtful person cannot devote himself completely¹⁴ to *one* trend; he sees all too clearly that in each of these trends are truth and untruth; hence he must try to do justice to all, to the truth in all. In short—what he needs is a “*synthesis*.”

Now then: 1) since everything human is historical, there is not *the* question, but always only the question of the *present*. In order to answer this question, or even just to pose it, we must know the situation of the present. 2) The situation of the present—that is, the factual, effective answers of the present. 3) The answer is given by a synopsis, σύνοψις, *conspectio*—conspectivism.¹⁵

1. Critique of Conspectivism.

α. The Incredible Difficulty of a Synthesis. Conspectivism is possible only because of the complete absence of a concrete notion of the emergence of a “position.” Every position that can at all be taken seriously is the work of an immense effort of an individual. When Kant—who already had achievements that by themselves would have made him immortal (Kant–Laplace theory), who was no inexperienced young man who yet had to acquire the necessary knowledge of facts—had accomplished the breakthrough to his position, he needed 11 years for the *Critique of Pure Reason*—not to write it, but just to think it. Let us assume that something similar goes for Marx or for Nietzsche. These men came to completely different results with their immense efforts. What an exponential effort it would take to find a position from which both positions were unified! How much deeper would someone have to descend in order to find the common point from which.... One need only imagine these difficulties in order to comprehend that the people who today talk of synthesis simply do not mean¹⁶ anything by it. But they must mean something by it! As it seems to me, conspectivism comes about in the following manner.

β. The Genesis of Conspectivism from the reader turned writer. The originators of positions have laid down the results of their {383} immense effort in published books. Everyone can buy these books or have them given to him as a gift or borrow them and then read them. Now, there are two types of readers. Some are narrowminded; they have a fixed and ready opinion; they read only in order to confirm their opinion: should the book *not* be of their opinion, they have enough arguments ready-at-hand to dismiss the book. For, what aren’t there arguments for; certain fundamental insights of Kant’s, which today any jackass has or believes he has, were “refuted” with sovereign superiority by jackasses among Kant’s contemporaries. This type of reader is harmless and innocuous. More harmful is the second type. To this type belong people who are stimulated by the books, who are open to everything new; these people are easily excited; they adopt one book’s conclusions

¹⁴ Ger.: mit Haut und Haar.

¹⁵ Ger.: Konspektivismus. Compare the following with Strauss’s unpublished review by this title, translated in appendix A, above.

¹⁶ Lit.: think. Likewise in the next sentence.

and then again another's. Since they are precisely *not* narrow, they cannot resist the conflicting theories. The theories can be formulated in certain keywords; these keywords can easily be adopted. One reads and reflects while reading; it occurs to one how things are related; one sits down and writes. The result of this very entertaining activity is a synthesis, that is, a book or a pamphlet or an essay. That is the essence of the conspectivist spirit.¹⁷ the conspectivist spirit is the lazy reader turned writer.

γ. Sham Understanding. In truth, one understands nothing conspectively, even if one is very bright. I want to give an example. In our time, somewhere there lives a philosopher in the full sense of the word.¹⁸ Completely unknown just five years ago, today his name and work are talked of everywhere. This philosopher in his main work has, among other things, written a few pages about idle talk, what it means and what it inflicts.¹⁹ That was meant as a, so to speak, purely factual statement, not as the author's appeal to spare him from idle talk. What happened? A woman²⁰—the noble word “lady” obviously forbids itself—reads this philosopher, and before she can even have the slightest idea of what the man really means, she goes around in London and yaks and yaks. She found the paragraph on idle talk certainly “very fine”; she has understood him in *this* sense; but she did not understand him in such a way that she would finally, finally shut her unbearable trap.

Therefore: if one takes *seriously* the great men who dominate the present, then one will not wish to attempt a synthesis, which amounts to muddling and diluting what was important to them. It {384} is preferable to despair in light of their contradiction than to give in to a stale and cowardly mishmash.

2. *The Situation of the Present can be grasped*²¹ *in the totality of the positions effective in the present.* Why *all* these positions? Because they are *equivalent*. Why are they equivalent? Because each one sees facts that the others do not see, or see indistinctly. But obviously it appears not to be important to see *everything* equally distinctly—but to see what is important distinctly and what is not important indistinctly. We must therefore already know beforehand what is important. One answers: what is important is the *total situation* of the present: what matters is the totality. The reason why individual positions cannot convince one another, cannot do justice to one another, is that they are not total.²² But is “justice” what matters simply? Is not “injustice” vis-à-vis what is not true truly just? Cannot the total view be supremely unjust? In truth, *all* views are total.

But assuming that a synthesis were possible and that all the positions effective in the present were equivalent: would it therefore be necessarily so that the synthesis actually conceived *the* situation of the present? For is it necessary that *all* viewpoints, that the *true* viewpoint be contained in the present viewpoints in such a way that it results from their synthesis? Is it not possible that *all* present standpoints

¹⁷ German: *Geistes*. Except where otherwise noted, *Geist* and its cognates are “intellect” and its cognates.

¹⁸ The reference is to Martin Heidegger. See the following note.

¹⁹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* §35 (10th ed.; 167–70)

²⁰ Ger.: *Weib*. In the next clause, “lady” is *Frau*.

²¹ Ger.: *ist fassbar*. Later in this subsection, “view” is *Auffassung*, and “viewpoint” is *Gesichtspunkt*.

²² Ger.: *untotal*.

rest on a mistaking of the fundamental facts? Are not perhaps all these standpoints “ideologies”? This is in no way settled. If we want to come to know the present just as it *is*, free from the dominant views, which we must first examine, then we must first of all be free of the present. This freedom does not fall into our laps; we must win it for ourselves.

3. *Necessity of the Naivety of the Questioning.* But is it true at all that we have to come to know the situation of the present in the first place? From mankind’s always having a present, it nevertheless does not follow that one need be concerned with it: our *fate is not our task*. This is the principal mistake to which today’s man keeps succumbing: the attempt to determine the task from the fate. This attempt is absurd if there is *no* God: then fate is chance, and if God *is*, then fate is providence, and we are not allowed to want to play God. This error manifests itself also in the will to synthesis: even if each standpoint may *be* a synthesis *in fact*—it is nonetheless *never willed as a synthesis*; what has been willed is always the *truth*. {385} We have to look ahead; we *never* come to know what we have to do by being reflective.

We want to do justice to the matter, then.²³ We turn to the matter,²⁴ that is, the question concerning the right life, with the will to answering it. But in order not to suffer shipwreck as thousands have suffered shipwreck *before* us, we do want to hear the *warning* of the present, the call: watch out. We will not listen to the present if it turns this failure into a theory, if it asserts the *inevitability* of failure. In order to be able to get beyond the present, we must take the warning of the present seriously, we must be in a position to interpret more closely the experience on which the present insists. We therefore do not ask about the *present*, but about the *warning* of the present. But in this warning we let ourselves encounter the present. We thus admit: failure will certainly not have been accidental, due to individual inadequacy, to the stupidity of earlier generations; it will have its *serious* reasons. In order to understand these serious reasons, we must take seriously the question about them, we must not truncate this question by the dogmatic assertion that there are no eternal truths.

By the way, what about the historical *experience* of this failure?

The question was posed for the first time by Socrates. Whether and in what sense he himself gave an answer is obscure. In any case, his student Plato answered it: in the *Republic*.²⁵ In order to illustrate the difficulty of true understanding, Plato in this work compares the situation of human beings to the situation of cave dwellers: a cave with a long entry stretching upwards; the human beings from childhood on are bound inside the cave by chains around their thighs and necks; they thus always remain in the same place, and they are prevented by their neck chains from turning their heads around; from above a firelight shines from a distance; above, between the fire and the prisoners runs a walkway, alongside which runs a wall; along this wall human beings carry all sorts of artifacts, statues, etc.; it appears that the prisoners there can see only the shadows of those artifacts, which are cast by the fire’s light

²³ Ger.: *Wir wollen also sachlich sein.*

²⁴ Ger.: *Sache.*

²⁵ See, for the following, *Republic* 514a–517a.

onto the cave's wall facing them; to them, therefore, the shadows would be the true things. Now, if one of them were unchained and put into a position to gaze freely up toward the light, which however could happen only under great pain {386}, he would, being blinded by the glow, be incapable of recognizing the things whose shadows he had seen before; he would be at a complete loss if he were told that now he was seeing the things whose shadows he had been seeing until now; above all, the very sight of the light would pain him so much that he would turn away and want again to retreat into the dark of the cave; and it would require a long habituation and effort, indeed the use of force, for him to be capable of seeing the true things, of living in the light of the truth. Brought back into the cave, he would retain the memory of his life in the light, but would be completely incomprehensible and laughable to his companions precisely because of this. Thus Plato presents the difficulties of philosophizing, the *natural* difficulties. If they are so extraordinary, is it any wonder that there are so many conflicting opinions? Bearing in mind the Platonic parable, we will not be misled by the anarchy of opinions, but will have to exert ourselves as much as possible to get out of the cave.

We said: Plato presents the *natural* difficulties of philosophizing. That is, those difficulties natural to man as man, as a sensitive-intellectual being, the difficulties that according to the Platonic view are given by his sensitivity.²⁶ We say "natural" because there are difficulties that are not "natural" but become effective only under certain presuppositions. RMbM in *Moreh Nebuchim*²⁷ (I 31) expands the enumeration of reasons given by a Greek philosopher for the differences of opinion in philosophy, and therefore for the difficulty of philosophy simply, by a fourth reason; about this he says, literally:

In our time there exists a fourth reason, which he [*sc.*, Alexander of Aphrodisias] did not mention, since it did not exist among them; namely, *habituation* and *schooling*; for human beings by nature love what they are habituated to and incline to it;...thus it happens to man regarding the opinions with which he has grown up: he loves them and holds on to them and keeps away from deviant opinions. For this reason as well, then, man is prevented from coming to know the truth. Thus it happens to the multitude regarding God's corporeality...on account of habituation to *writings* in which they firmly believe and to which they are habituated, whose wording seems to indicate God's corporeality.

Let us sum up: by the fact that a tradition resting on revelation has entered the world of philosophy, the difficulty of philosophizing is fundamentally augmented {387}, the *freedom* of philosophizing fundamentally limited.

In RMbM's remark, the struggle of the entire last 3 centuries, the struggle of the Enlightenment, is in a sense sketched, outlined: in order to render possible philosophy in its natural difficulty, the artificial difficulty of philosophizing has to be eliminated;²⁸ there has to be a struggle against *prejudices*. In this, modern philosophy is fundamentally different from Greek philosophy: the latter struggles only against

²⁶ Ger.: *Sinnlichkeit*.

²⁷ That is, *Guide of the Perplexed*. Strauss uses the traditional Hebrew title.

²⁸ More or less lit.: removed from the world.

appearance and opinion; modern philosophy's struggle begins prior to that against prejudices. The Enlightenment thus wants to recover Greek philosophy. What does it achieve? It achieves: the freedom of *answering* but not the freedom of questioning, only the freedom of saying No instead of the traditional Yes. (Mortality vs. immortality, chance vs. providence, atheism vs. theism, passion vs. reason.²⁹) But this liberation from the Yes of the tradition takes place by means of a commensurately deeper entanglement in the tradition. For instance, the Enlightenment conducts its struggle against the tradition in the name of tolerance, ultimately in the name of love of neighbor; thus religion is now being based entirely on love of neighbor, in such a way, however, that with the doubt of love of neighbor (as understood by the Enlightenment)³⁰ religion as such becomes altogether doubtful. Or to take an example from a later stage of the Enlightenment: when the Enlightenment becomes openly atheistic and believes it sees through "God" as being a construct of the human heart, the only way it does so is by internalizing the purposes of God into mankind: self-redemption of mankind, self-assurance of immortality (museum, etc.), assuming the role of providence. And if opponents of Enlightenment arise at every stage of it, then these opponents, for their part, take over the successes of the Enlightenment and reconstruct their position in accord with these. (E.g., revelation is understood as being a human product, as morals and as form, not as law; creation is understood not as being the creation of the world, but as what is binding in advance on human beings.)³¹ In general: since the Enlightenment, each generation has *generally* reacted to the preceding generation without questioning the foundation. For example, the concept of the "irrational"—rationalism understood in the narrowest sense.³² {388}

Example: The Problem of Creation

1. God has created the world in complete freedom, out of love; he rules over it in complete freedom—justly and wisely, but in such a way that we are not authorized and not able to know the ways of his justice and wisdom. In his freedom he can perform miracles. Miracles are not in themselves "more divine" than the usual course of the world; but there is no reason for saying that God could not and would not perform miracles.
2. The struggle against miracles in the name of metaphysics: miracles are unworthy of God as the perfect being.
3. Modern physics understands nature completely on its own terms: No scientific proof of God possible. God related to the humanity of human beings.
4. Nature a construct of human intellect.³³
5. By analogy with this construct, the whole of "culture," and with it religion, is understood as a construct of the human mind.³⁴

²⁹ Ger.: *Verstand*.

³⁰ Ger.: *aufgeklärt verstanden*.

³¹ Ger.: *als Vorher-verbindlich über den Menschen verfügt sein*.

³² [Note in margin:] Theory vs. Intuition
Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia {HM}

³³ Ger.: *Verstand*.

³⁴ Ger.: *Geistes*.

6. Novel understanding of the original religious attitude (in contrast to mysticism): the demanding God who summons before him.³⁵ The abandonment of creation remains.

The entanglement in the tradition is further intensified by a *theory* that *legitimizes* this entanglement. While the Enlightenment itself was wholly convinced that history was accidental, that the victorious party was not in the right just because it happened to be victorious, in the nineteenth century the belief that world history is the world's court of judgment becomes dominant. (A belief that can be justified in the natural sciences, where in fact an unequivocal progress, a building on the accomplishments of earlier generations, is possible but that is, at bottom, impossible.³⁶

Thus: the question *πὺς βιωτέον* is hard to answer today not merely on account of the *natural* difficulties, not merely on account of the dominance of a tradition of which we are aware as being a tradition, but on account of our total entanglement in the tradition, which goes so far that we *cannot* express ourselves purely and freely, that every attempt to express and determine what we have seen and experienced is impossible at first. But what then can we do now?)

The struggle against the tradition that leads to the complete entanglement in the tradition, also dissolves the tradition. In every subsequent {389} generation there is *in fact* ever less tradition. The struggle against the tradition was ever again forced to appeal to the *opponents* of the tradition, to those against whom the tradition had arisen and prevailed. Those elements that were supplanted by the tradition reappear (the pagans, Epicurus, vindication of heretics of all types, the sophists, idolatry). These elements became *understood*. The end of this struggle is the *complete rejection* of the tradition: not just of its answers, also not just of its questions, but of its possibilities: The pillars on which our tradition rested, prophets and Socrates-Plato, are torn down since Nietzsche. *Nietzsche's* siding with kings against prophets, with sophists against Socrates—Jesus not only no God, also no charlatan, also no genius, but a moron. Θεωρεῖν³⁷ and “good—evil” rejected—Nietzsche the *last* Enlightener.

The tradition has been shaken at its *roots* by Nietzsche. It has altogether forfeited its self-evidence. We stand in the world completely without authority, completely without orientation. Only now has the question *πὺς βιωτέον* regained its full sharpness. We *can* again pose it. We have the possibility of posing it in full seriousness. We can no longer read Plato's dialogues superficially, in order to notice admiringly that old Plato already knew this and that; we can no longer polemicize against him superficially. And the same with the Bible: we no longer think without evidence that the prophets were in the right; we ask ourselves seriously whether it was not the kings who were in the right. We really must begin *entirely* from the beginning.

We *can* begin entirely from the beginning: we lack any polemical passions against the tradition (we have, after all, nothing from where we could be polemical); and at

³⁵ Ger.: *der Fordernde, vor sich fordernde Gott*.

³⁶ This sentence and the entire next paragraph are enclosed in parentheses in Strauss's ms.

³⁷ Gk.: *Contemplating*.

the same time, the tradition has become completely estranged from us, completely questionable.

But we cannot answer immediately as we are; for we know that we are deeply entangled in a tradition; we are yet much further down than Plato's cave dwellers. We must raise ourselves to the *origin* of the tradition, to the level of *natural ignorance*. If we wanted to concern ourselves with the present situation, we would be doing nothing other than the cave dwellers who describe the interior of their cave.

We have the *possibility*, then, of understanding the origins of our tradition freely: if we make the greatest effort; that is, understanding freely what has always been handed {390} down as more or less *self-evident*. But what is "self-evident" is really³⁸ always *not understood*. This lack of understanding is the final reason why the struggle against the tradition has become possible and necessary. The final result; the *factual ignorance* of the origins (e.g., μεγαλοψυχία—nobility).³⁹

The question concerning the religious situation of the present is no serious topic. The serious thing that is meant by this question is the question concerning the right life. The answer to this question requires not only no special attention to the present situation, but in fact the determined⁴⁰ return to our historical origins, the uncompromising scrutiny of the supposed "achievements" of history.

³⁸ Ger.: *im Grunde*.

³⁹ Ger.: *Vornehmheit*. The Greek *megalopsychia* means, lit., "greatness of soul."

⁴⁰ Ger.: *entschlossenen*.

APPENDIX C

LEO STRAUSS: “THE INTELLECTUAL SITUATION OF THE PRESENT” (1932)¹

Translated by Anna Schmidt and Martin D. Yaffe

Introduction: *captatio benevolentiae*

The topic is *disreputable*. A proper scholar² adjusts his ambition to speaking only on topics he has expert knowledge of, that is, on topics whose material he knows and has adequately worked through intellectually. I do not have the reassuring awareness:³ here no one can damage or hurt me, here I am knowledgeable, as regards this evening’s topic. I am not a specialist in the present: I have neither climbed all its heights nor descended into all its nooks. The awareness that it is *impossible* to be a specialist in the present probably prompts people who care about their scholarly prestige to stay away from this topic.

If I nevertheless put up for discussion the intellectual situation of the present, it is because I feel emboldened by the following consideration. Certainly it is very fine and comfortable to be able to step forth as if clad in iron armor. But the armor of scholarship always clads a being scarcely made of iron—namely, a human being who questions. Now, there are questions that are hard to ask and even harder to answer, so that one would really prefer to deny they exist. But they force themselves onto us: we ask them and we answer them—even if with the worst conscience. Now, the precaution of not doing things in public that one does secretly with a bad conscience is certainly very prudent; but perhaps *too* prudent; is it not almost

¹ [Leo Strauss, “*Die geistige Lage der Gegenwart*,” GS-2 441–64, 623.] Unpublished. Bound manuscript with 12 written pages (three of them loose) and inscribed cover, in ink, with additions and corrections in pencil. Two pages (two sides) with the draft of an alternative introduction under the title *Preliminary Remark* and a further sheet (two pages) attached with the plan of the lecture, all in pencil. On the cover and on the first page of the manuscript, Strauss has noted: 6.II.1932. Leo Strauss Papers, Box 8, Folder 6, Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library. {HM}

² Ger.: *Wissenschaftler*. Or: scientist (depending on the field of study).

³ Ger.: *Bewusstsein*. Or: consciousness (henceforth depending on the context).

already *cowardice*?⁴ Therefore, if we do not want to be cowards, we should admit that now and again we nevertheless think about the intellectual situation of the present and hence under certain conditions express these thoughts among ourselves {442}. They are not entirely absurd, after all—perhaps they will even be of some use for our respectable scholarly work as well. That being said, on to the subject-matter.

1. *What does the intellectual situation of the present matter to us Jews?* It matters to us insofar as the *present situation of Judaism* matters to us.

Both the dissolution process and the consolidation process determined in a European manner.⁵

That seems paradoxical: Does not the consolidation, in contradistinction to Jewish self-renunciation, have the character of Jewish self-reflection, of the return and retreat to Judaism? Does it not have the *restitutio in integrum* as its aim? Is not the integrity of Judaism the guiding thought of the Jewish movement?

In order to recognize the European determination of the consolidation process, one need only look at the 3 steps of this process in a row.

1. *Political Zionism*. People as a natural group of human beings, which is held together by a common enemy; national association as an imperative of *honor*. *Difference from the tradition*: Pinsker's⁶ motive. Trust in oneself versus trust in God (not: power vs. spirit).
2. *Cultural Zionism*. Jewish tradition turns into the stuff of a European behavior: Jewish humanism. Ahad Ha'am⁷ and Hegel. *Difference from the tradition*: not revelation but development.
3. *Return to the Law*. Rosenzweig⁸ and Elective Affinities.⁹ *Difference: the Law as such*. In principle: European *reservations* against the tradition (Cohen, The Social Ideal)¹⁰—or renunciation of European *prejudices*. In either case: the situation of the present matters to us.

⁴ Ger.: *Duckmäuserei*. Or: hypocrisy.

⁵ Ger.: *europäisch bedingt*.

⁶ Leo Pinsker (1821–91). See his *Autoemancipation* (1882) in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 181–98. Cf. LSEW 104.

⁷ Ahad Ha'am, pen name of Asher Hirsch Ginsberg (1856–1927), the “founder of cultural Zionism” (Strauss, Preface to *SCR*, in *JPCM* 144–45 with 341, 355n41). See Ahad Ha'am's address to the First Zionist Congress (1897), in *JWM* 541–43. Cf. LSEW 81, 119, 131, 203–4.

⁸ See note 3 of appendix B.

⁹ Ger.: *die Wahlverwandschaften*. That is, the title of Goethe's novel. Rosenzweig understands the term to mean “the maze of feeling” in contrast to “the maze of action” (the emphasis is Rosenzweig's); see *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (2nd ed.; New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 13. Cf. Strauss, Preface to *SCR*, in *JPCM* 153.

¹⁰ Hermann Cohen (1842–1919): “in the middle of World War I, the greatest representative of German Jewry and spokesman for it, the most powerful figure among the German professors of philosophy of his time, stated his view on Jerusalem and Athens in a lecture entitled ‘The Social Ideal in Plato and the Prophets’” (Strauss, JA, in *JPCM* 398–99); see Cohen, “Das soziale Ideal bei Platon und den Propheten,” *Hermann Cohens Jüdische Schriften* (3 vols.; Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke & Sohn, 1924), I, 306–30. Cf. LSEW 76, 107, 109–10, 112–14, 134, 139–73, 216, etc.; Strauss, Preface to *SCR*, in *JPCM* 154, 158–59, and “Introductory Essay to Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*,” in *JPCM* 267–82; and chapter 4 of the present volume.

What does the intellectual situation of the present matter to us Jews? It matters to us insofar as the present situation of Judaism matters to us; for the present situation of Judaism is at the same time determined by Judaism's past, by Jewish history *and* by the present world situation. The determination of the Jewish situation at any given time by two factors—by Judaism and by the world—has existed at least for as long as we have lived in the Galut.¹¹ Determination by the second factor has considerably *intensified*, so much that it has *changed* fundamentally since the beginning of the age of assimilation and the *dissolution* of the Jewish tradition dating from this age. Now, in the last decades, the {443} dissolution process has been countered by the attempt at a *consolidation* of the setting of Jewish life,¹² by Zionism in particular. But no one who knows this attempt from seeing for himself and does not judge it by its surface can fail to see that it is by dint of *European* thoughts and demands that the consolidation of Judaism is being attempted in our time. For example, it may be true—though in the end it is not as true as most people believe—that Jewish socialism has its origin in the demands and promises of the Prophets: this socialism would not have been able to receive its present form without the authoritative influence of European ideas. *The consolidation of the setting of Jewish life is no less determined in a European manner*¹³ *than is the dissolution of Jewish tradition preceding it.* That seems paradoxical. Is not this consolidation precisely the consequence of Jewish self-reflection in contrast to Jewish self-renunciation in the age of assimilation?

Now this determination can be evaluated in various ways. One can say: we have *learned* many things from Europe in the last 150 years, much that is dubious, but nevertheless also a few things of undoubted value; that is, we have learned a few things that we could not have learned from the Jewish tradition; we thereby have certain *reservations* vis-à-vis the Jewish tradition, *European* reservations; what ensues accordingly is this demand: that the consolidation of the setting of Jewish life be carried out in a manner that takes into account these reservations that cannot be renounced; and for just that reason we must be concerned with Europe.

One thing about this view¹⁴ cannot be disputed: it is *upright*; it does not make the task comfortable for itself; it does not smuggle in foreign elements under the cover of the Jewish flag, that is, by the use of biblical and talmudic passages torn out of context. But it causes a certain unease, since it is alarmingly reminiscent of the view of *Reform*¹⁵ that wanted to renew Judaism by making it up-to-date and that thereby only rendered Judaism hollow and sentimental. Over and against all attempts at Reform, the argument of S. R. Hirsch¹⁶ will always remain victorious—that it would be contradictory to measure the eternal by standards of time.

¹¹ Heb.: Exile.

¹² Ger.: *jüdischen Lebenszusammenhangs*.

¹³ Ger.: *europäisch bedingt*.

¹⁴ [Note in the margin:] Example Cohen's "The Social Ideal in Plato and the Prophets" {HM}

¹⁵ That is, the "reformation of Judaism sought by enlightened Jews [comprising] not simply a diminution of the ritual burdens of the Jew but also an elimination or, at least, a blurring of the ethnic and national features of traditional Judaism" (*JWM* 156).

¹⁶ Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–88), German rabbi and intellectual founder of neo-Orthodoxy. See his "Religion Allied to Progress" (1854) and "A Sermon on the Science of Judaism" (1855) in *JMW* 197–202, 234–35. Cf. CaM 184n58–58, with APT n58 as supplemented in *LSMC* 603n58.

Let us make these facts a bit clearer to ourselves. The Jewish {444} problem, whose urgency in the age of National Socialism scarcely needs proof, forced out of Herzl¹⁷ the idea of the Jewish national state, which then, simply for reasons of realistic politics, was altered into the idea of the Jewish national home in Palestine. Herzl imagined this state as being exactly like a European state. But whereas in European states the national state idea was indissolubly connected with the national culture—I recall the significance of the French Revolution for the original French nationalism, and of France's Catholic tradition for today's French nationalism—merely political Zionism lacked that sort of native soil: Herzl's Palestine was in Ahad Ha'am's opinion nothing else than a Jewish Liberia. Thus Zionism was led from being merely political Zionism to being cultural Zionism, the demand for national culture, and that means: the care and development of the Jewish tradition came to be accepted. Now, no one could overlook that things are different with Jewish culture than with the cultures of other peoples. Jewish culture is identical with learning and fulfilling the Law. Thus many cultural Zionists were led to acceptance of the Law and submission to the Law, and so Zionism was getting ever closer to Jewish tradition. There arose the possibility that European reservations vis-à-vis the Jewish tradition were no longer even possible and necessary: *the integrity of Judaism* seemed to become possible again.

Now there is something awkward about acceptance of the Law by cultural Zionism, since according to the view of Jewish tradition Jewish Law is a Law given by God. Were the Law to prescribe only actions and prohibitions, it could in the end be fulfilled also by unbelievers; but it also and especially prescribes prayers: how should he pray who does not believe in God? The atheistic Zionist is hence confronted with the question, *why* does he not believe in God? Since the unbelief of a Jew in our time is nothing else than the general unbelief, the atheistic Zionist, in any case, sees himself compelled to concern himself with the intellectual situation of the present.

But not only he. Those Jews of our time who took an active part in the consolidation process, who in this way came to {445} accept the Law and who have not been driven mad by the difficulty of believing in God, conceive of the Law differently than the Jewish tradition. I recall the outstanding man of this group, Franz Rosenzweig, who reproaches Jewish orthodoxy for de facto having granted priority to prohibitions over commands (e.g., with respect to שבת);¹⁸ in contrast, he wants to regard prohibitions only as the other side of commands. In his struggle against the rigidity of the Law, he goes so far as to want to dissolve entirely the distinction between *minhag* and *din*.¹⁹

The question concerning the intellectual situation of the present is *ambiguous*: it can be understood in a way that is matter-of-fact or in a way that is vain; it can

¹⁷Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), father of political Zionism, founder of the World Zionist Organization, and author of *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jews' State*; 1896). See his "A Solution of the Jewish Question," in *JMW* 533–38. Cf. *LSEW* 81, 83–87, 102, 119, 128, 203, with the editor's note at 82n2.

¹⁸Heb.: *shabbos*. That is, "Sabbath," transliterated according to the Ashkenazic (Germanic) pronunciation.

¹⁹Heb.: custom...law. See, for example, *Franz Rosenzweig*, ed. Glatzer, 233–47; cf. Strauss, Preface to *SCR*, in *JPCM* 153.

serve the seriousness of self-reflection or the frivolousness of self-satisfaction and self-assurance. We want to come to a rather drastic distinction between the serious and the vain question concerning the intellectual situation of the present. We begin *prior* to this distinction: we pretend as if the question were *not* ambiguous.

Let us suppose then that this question is straightforward—it is however *not natural*. In order to see this, one need only consider the following: at any time there existed an “intellectual situation of the present”; but no one concerned himself with it; no one ever knew *that* there was an “intellectual situation of the present.” Thoughtful people concerned themselves with the eternal; and the temporal—the temporal that was important from [the point of view of] the eternal and for the sake of the eternal was never the present but rather the past, the *old*: what was founded in the past and has lasted for a long time has stood the test of time; and what has stood the test of time has the opinion going for it that it is true. In contrast, the present, the new, is held to be suspect; it is only for a brief while, it is brief, short-lived, a momentary ripple not worth one’s attention. In recalling this earlier way of thinking one understands that interest in the intellectual situation of the present is not *natural* to man but is tied to certain *historical* conditions, that it really is something *of the present*. Thus we get our first answer to the question about the *intellectual situation of the present*: this situation is characterized {446} by the question about it. If, then, we wish to understand the intellectual situation of the present, we must ask: *why* does the whole world today ask about the intellectual situation of the present?

This question cannot be settled by the statement: well, we live *today*, and therefore what happens today is of greater importance for us than what happened in the past. This answer is justified regarding all practical tasks, small and large. If I want to buy myself a hat, then what matters to me are the present hat designs and the present hat prices only; if someone wants to get married, then what matters to him are the provisions of the German Civil Code only and he does not need to take an interest in Roman law or the Code of Hammurabi; what interests the statesman is only the present constellation of powers, etc., etc. But if one asks about the *principles* of action, about *the* right and good, then it is conceivable that here it would be extremely dubious to let oneself become involved with the present: namely, assuming that the present were an age of decline. Why then do we inquire today about the intellectual situation of the present *as a matter of principle*²⁰—and not for instance about the intellectual situation of the biblical time or of the Greek golden age?

One need only ask the question in this form in order to already have the answer: were these ages for us still the classic ages, the authoritative ages, then *they* would be at the center of our interest. But precisely this is characteristic of our age: that the old *traditions*—the tradition of the Bible and the tradition of Greek philosophy—have lost their power. The 17th and 18th centuries, the Age of *Enlightenment*, has won *freedom from all tradition*. The fact that a particular doctrine or institution can invoke, be it the Bible, be it Plato or Aristotle, no longer compels us.

The Enlightenment won the freedom from traditions by fighting the traditions in the name of the *principles* of the tradition: it fought against Aristotelian-scholastic

²⁰ Ger.: *in prinzipieller Absicht*.

science in the name of the Greek principle of science; it fought against the intolerance of Judaism and Christianity in the name of the biblical principle of love of one's neighbor. The 19th century radicalized this fight of the Enlightenment: it challenged the *principles* of the tradition; it called into question science as such and love of neighbor as such; it tore down the *pillars* on which the European world is built. This decisive act, this *completion {447} of the Enlightenment*, is tied and will always remain tied to the name of Friedrich *Nietzsche*.

Not only the traditions but the principles of the tradition were called into question by Nietzsche. The freedom of thinking that had been won by the Enlightenment, the freedom to think the opposite of what the Middle Ages had thought has become infinitely exceeded; we are *completely free*. But free *for what*? Have the principles of the tradition been replaced by other binding principles? Not at all. We therefore do not *know* at all *what* we are free *for*, what we live for, what the right and good are according to which we can be at peace with ourselves. *Our freedom is the freedom of radical ignorance*. The intellectual situation of the present is characterized by our knowing nothing anymore, by our knowing nothing.

Out of the recognition and admission of this ignorance grows the necessity of *questioning*, questioning about the right and good. And here the following paradox presents itself: while the present is as *compelled to question as any age*, it is *less capable of questioning than any age*. We *must* question without being *capable* of questioning. From this embarrassment arises the question concerning the intellectual situation of the present.

If someone says today that the first and most urgent question is the question concerning the right life and that this question must be answered by reason, that is, scientifically, then the present confronts him with the verdict: this question cannot be answered by scientific means; the answer to this question can be only a *value judgment*, and value judgments cannot be justified and cannot be refuted by scientific means; they rest on will or on belief, on the free decision of the person. Since that is so, a universally binding knowledge about the right life is not possible—there exists at bottom a “polytheism of values.” The *de facto anarchy* is thus *claimed* to be necessary and thereby consolidated.

I do not have the possibility here of proving with the requisite thoroughness the untenability of this utterly unphilosophical view, that is, a view that cuts off the real question. This proof would be identical with a radical critique of the life's work of Max Weber.²¹ Here I would prefer only to recall two points. 1) The concept of “value judgment” presupposes that there are judgments that are not value judgments—hence properly scientific judgments; it is in this sense that value-free science mattered to Weber. Now it is not *{448}* that difficult to show that Weber's science, which he intended to be value-free, is wholly conditioned by his value judgments; these are the ultimate presuppositions of his scientific research. 2) Now Weber has in no way shirked the clarification of these presuppositions; on the contrary: his whole scientific life's work aims precisely at this clarification, that is, the understanding of its presuppositions from their history; thereby he provided himself with an altogether different basis than a merely personal decision.

²¹ Cf. “Conspicivism” (appendix A), note 40.

In principle: the “free decision of the person” that does not want to depend on any justification “does not take place in a vacuum.” It is conditioned by the *history* in which the person concerned stands. The knowledge of man’s being conditioned by the history that is *his* history is called *historical consciousness*. The historical consciousness that develops into historical *science* is the closest counterauthority against the ruling anarchy: as science, historical science makes possible universal validity.

But as it happens, historical consciousness is just that factor that thwarts the question concerning the right life. For if man is essentially historical, then there is not *the* right life; but each age, each historical situation has *its* “right life,” *its* ideal of life. *Therefore* we cannot ask about *the* right life, but only about *our* right life, about the ideal of life that is *up-to-date*,²² the right life of the *present*. But how to know what ideal of life is the one suitable to the present? That is possible only if the *situation* of the present is known.

We began from the fact that the intellectual life of the present is characterized by the *question* concerning the intellectual situation of the present. We asked about the *reason*²³ for this question. The reason for this question is the necessity to ask about the right life. Under the presuppositions of historical consciousness the question concerning the right life *compels us to ask the question concerning the intellectual situation of the present*.

Because man is essentially historical, there are no eternal principles, no eternal ideal of life. One can thus not ask about *the* ideal of life, but only, at best, about the present ideal of life. In order to determine the present ideal of life, one must know the present *situation*. The present situation is known in the life of the present, which we grasp above all in the intellectual productions of the present. {449}

Now, these productions themselves, however, have the character—explicitly or implicitly—of answers to the question concerning *the*—or rather concerning the present—ideal of life. And these answers are all in contradiction with one another. The situation of the present—it consists in the *contradictions* of the present. That is why one can only extract a unified ideal of life from the situation of the present if these contradictions can be resolved in the form of a higher unity: the present ideal of life would be the *synthesis* of these actual answers that are effective today. But such a synthesis is impossible. What is the higher synthesis supposed to be in which Marx’s and Nietzsche’s ideal of life—the conviction that exploitation is bad in itself and the conviction that the abolition²⁴ of exploitation is the abolition of life—could be unified? Or how is a synthesis of capitalism and communism imaginable? Whoever proposes a synthesis here is confusing synthesis with compromise.

But even granted that a synthesis of the answers effective at present were possible, it is a question whether this synthesis would disclose for us the *real* situation of the present. For if all of today’s positions *are mistaken about a basic character of the present situation*, then this fundamental defect cannot be disposed of by the synthesis of these positions: on the contrary, a synthesis would only reinforce this defect.

²² Ger.: *zeitgemäß*.

²³ Ger.: *Grund*.

²⁴ Ger.: *Aufhebung*.

Allegedly, the situation of the present is knowable from the present positions. How does one recognize that a position is a present one? Surely not by its being represented in a writing published in 1932. Even now books still appear that are written from the standpoint of Thomas Aquinas, from a standpoint, that is, that no one will so easily describe as being a present one. In order to recognize a standpoint as a present one, one must already have a guiding idea of the present. And this guiding idea can be gained only from the knowledge of the entire historical process out of which the present comes. In any case, the situation of the present cannot be known *from* the present.

What is present may be said only on the basis of a knowledge of the entire course of history. Now, this course is open to extremely different interpretations. Which of these interpretations is the right one? There seem to be as many possibilities as there are present positions. If the anarchy of present positions is not {450} overcome,²⁵ then the question of which interpretation of the entire course of history is the right one cannot be answered. And since we can determine the situation of the present only if we can answer this question, *the situation of the present is not determinable, not knowable.*

Allegedly, the situation of the present is knowable from the entirety of positions effective in the present. Why from *all* these positions? Because they are equivalent. Why are they equivalent? Because each one sees facts that are not seen or seen only vaguely by the others. But obviously it is not seeing everything equally clearly that is important—but seeing clearly what is important and vaguely what is not important. For if one position looks at the world from the frog's perspective and another looks at it from the bird's perspective, there is surely no doubt which of these positions takes priority. I must therefore already know beforehand which facts are important. But this presupposes that I know what is important. But if I know this, then I know which life is the right one, and I do not need to ask about the situation of the present at all.

Now as it happens, the reason why we ask about the situation of the present is the fact that we do not know what is right. And it turns out that the question concerning the situation of the present cannot be answered. Thus the question concerning what is right cannot be answered at all. Thus the radical ignorance remains and must remain. We are thus condemned to live without orientation; that is, we cannot live at all. Let us attempt to determine this inability of ours to live more exactly.

The intellectual situation of the present is determined by the historical consciousness. This means that eternal, unconditional principles of living are not recognized: all that is left are conditional, precisely historically conditioned principles. Now, in our world, fundamentally different historical principles are effective, but these can now no longer be summed up in *one* universally binding, eternal order: the polytheism of values, *anarchy*, rules. Now the fact cannot be completely forgotten that in earlier times eternal, unconditional principles knowable to reason *itself*, and hence an order, were held to be possible and necessary.

²⁵ Ger.: *aufgehoben*. Cf. the previous note.

This belief is now considered *naive*: we know based on a radical *reflection* that rational knowledge about *the* right is not possible. Being more radically reflective, we are *superior* to the past. {451} Do we not *thus* have knowledge as an unconditional standard? No; for we merely say: *if* knowledge is the ideal of life, then the more radical knowledge is preferable to the more naive knowledge; but *that* knowledge is the ideal of life is itself historically conditioned. In fact, conditioned by the European tradition founded by the Greeks. In the non-European worlds there are completely different ideals of life, and it is impossible for us to hold these worlds to be inferior to us on account of their naivety. Hence the result: historical consciousness leads to the awareness of superiority over the European past and the awareness of the complete equality of non-European ideals; and in many cases: contempt for the European past and prostration before everything exotic. Now, it is natural to man to treasure and *cultivate* what is his own, what is handed down to him by his forebears, whereas he *confronts* what is foreign proudly, suspiciously, cautiously, at most with respect and admiration. Measured by this natural stance, the stance dominant in Europe today appears to be antinatural, *pervse*. Our inability to live, which manifests itself in our inability to question, is our unnaturalness, the unnaturalness of our world.

Nonetheless we, too, are still in a certain way natural beings. And even if, in this respect, we had to despair in the face of ourselves, the fact that even today children are generated naturally and born naturally could reassure us. And even if these children become corrupted soon enough by the dominant unnaturalness, there yet remains the hope, so long as there are human beings on the earth, that some day human beings will be able to be natural again.

We, too, are still natural beings. That we are still natural shows itself in the fact that we, confronted with the ignorance of what is right, escape into the *question* concerning what is right—escape from the unnaturalness of our situation. The *need* to know, and therefore the questioning, is the best guarantee that we are still natural beings, humans—but that we *are not capable of* questioning is the clear symptom of our being threatened in our humanity in a way that humans have never been threatened.

Under the presupposition of historical consciousness, the question concerning the right life compels us to ask the question concerning the intellectual situation of the present. Since *this* question cannot be answered, then the question concerning {452} the right life seems no longer answerable. Should it be answerable, this would be possible only by *calling historical consciousness into question*. But is this not a fantastic undertaking? *How* may historical consciousness be called into question? By recognizing basically this: historical consciousness is itself historically conditioned, therefore itself destined to give way to another consciousness. There is a world, that is, a real, historical world beyond historical consciousness. That this possibility exists *in principle* no one will dispute. But, it will be said, this world is the barbarism that awaits us no matter what; historical consciousness will go away if humanity unlearns what it has learned arduously enough over the past centuries; the renunciation of historical consciousness is identical with the relapse into a stage of lesser reflection.

Let us pause here for a moment. Historical consciousness is—one cannot emphasize this strongly enough—according to its own view a stage of higher awareness: we know *more* than the earlier generations; we know more deeply, more profoundly, than the earlier ones that everything human is historically conditioned. But as it happens historical consciousness is the reason why, although we are compelled to question, we are incapable of questioning. *Thus* we are more incapable of questioning than the earlier generations—since we know more, since we know too much. But we are compelled to question since at bottom we know *nothing*. Being fundamentally *ignorant we cannot come to knowledge since we know too much*. Since we *believe* we know too much. We will not be able to remove our radical ignorance until this belief that we know is abolished.

Historical consciousness includes in itself the conviction that we stand at a higher stage of reflection than earlier human beings: we regard ourselves as having *progressed*. Now there are without question many men especially today who are of the opinion that our age is an age of decline. But precisely such men are mostly of the opinion that the character of decline of our time has its reason in our being too conscious, that in our time knowledge plays a role not allotted to it in healthy times; precisely such men usually believe that there are opportunities for coming to knowledge as there have never been before (Spengler);²⁶ they are of the opinion that precisely *because* today it is twilight, the owl of Minerva could begin its flight. That we have progressed is quite the dominant opinion. {453}

But how do things really stand concerning our progressiveness? Our progressiveness could only be the result of the modern development. Let us therefore question the history of this development.

The modern centuries are dominated by the pathos of progress in knowledge and through knowledge. At the beginning of the modern development stands the fight against scholastic science. This science was stagnating; it essentially did nothing other than transmit and explain Aristotle. Regarding physics, within which the fight primarily took place, the founders of modern philosophy and physics were astonished at the fact that the Scholastic philosophers investigated not nature but—Aristotle. (Cremonini.)²⁷ This was possible only because Scholasticism presupposed explicitly or implicitly that science was essentially completed: one did not see a *possibility* of advancing; one did *not* have *the intention* of advancing; one *did not have confidence* in advancing. Modern philosophy begins with the completely opposite intention: *plus ultra*. One can illustrate this opposition in the following manner. Science emerged with the Greeks in an age of civic flourishing, as a concern of free citizens; it had its center in the city of Athens, of whose citizens Thucydides writes that they are always ready to *hope*, always anxious to discover something new—as opposed to the Lacedaemonians, who regard science with mistrust, who are *not* hopeful, little confident in their ability, holding on to the old. Scholastic science was (at least in Christendom) pursued by monks. The newer philosophy is once again

²⁶ Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), *Der Untergang des Abendlands* [*The Decline of the West*] (1918); cf. PoR 100.

²⁷ Cesare Cremonini (1550–1631). Prolific expositor of Aristotle; accused of Averroism.

the concern of free citizens, who, as once were the Athenians, were ready to hope and keen to do something new again. Full of self-confidence did one thus confront classical philosophy; it was not long until a dispute began about the superiority of the moderns over the ancients. In any case, the unimaginable revolutions in the natural sciences proved that a progress beyond classical science was possible and real. It is a question, however, whether this progress was a fundamental progress, a progress in the foundation. If one turns with this question to the modern *philosophers*, then all will answer that also in philosophy the moderns got further than the ancients. And this getting further is indeed quite evident; for assuming equal effort and equal seriousness, must not {454} science also progress with the progressing of time?

Certainly so, if one assumes in addition the same starting-point.

In contrast to this predominant awareness of progress and progressiveness in the more recent centuries, however, stands the fact that in these centuries the conviction of the *authoritative significance of the Greeks* keeps breaking through. From this point of view, the fight against the Middle Ages appears as an attempt to recover Greek freedom, Greek science. At the beginning of modern philosophy stands the Renaissance, the renaissance of *antiquity*. In fact, the fight against the Scholastics is in considerable part conducted in the manner of opposing *genuine* Greek science—whether it be Aristotle himself, or Plato, or Democritus and Epicurus—to the *corrupt* Greek science of Scholasticism.

Now, one can say: this *counter-movement* is always a misunderstanding or only a device or a subsequent corrective of the *real* movement, which is a movement of *progress*. This remark is surely justified within certain limits—namely, insofar as one keeps to the *explicit consciousness* of the newer centuries. But if one looks at what went on *in reality*, then one gets a different impression.

Even the fiercest opponents of the Greeks believed themselves able to put into effect the progress they had in mind only after they had laid the foundation for it by a *return*, namely, by a return to *nature*. Rousseau's call to *return* to nature, which has become part of our collective memory, is only *one* example of that and not even the best one. The reversionary character of modern philosophy shows itself much more fundamentally in the fact that is decisive for the whole span of the 17th and 18th centuries: in the *fight against prejudices* that fills these centuries. The word "prejudice" is indeed the Enlightenment's polemical keyword—it is met with so to speak on every page of every writing of the Enlightenment. One must *free* oneself from prejudices, and this freeing is accomplished by *retreating* to a plane, or even a point, from which one can finally free progress of prejudice once and for all.

Today's reader of a writing from the Age of Enlightenment {455} in which prejudices are fought so fiercely will often have to smile when he realizes just how strong were the prejudices of the supposedly prejudice-free gentlemen of the Enlightenment. One could even say: the century of the Enlightenment was the century of prejudices. We today are therefore very cautious in the use of the word "prejudice." *Historical consciousness* has corrected us in that it is not possible for man to live prejudice-free: every age has *its* prejudices; and the fight against prejudices *as such* always only means the fight against the prejudices of *others*—for with one's own prejudices there is the awkwardness of not being able to know them *as* prejudices. If then only historical consciousness has set us straight about the universal

significance of the category of “prejudice,” the *overcoming*²⁸ of *historical consciousness* would bring with it the *overcoming of the universal significance of “prejudice.”*

With respect to questioning historical consciousness it was said: if everything human is historical, then historical consciousness is also historical; that is, destined at some time to be no more. This historical conditionality of historical consciousness can be demonstrated concretely by the category of “prejudice.”

The word “prejudice” is older than modern philosophy—but only in the Age of Enlightenment does it achieve *authoritative* significance. What Greek philosophy fought against was opinion or appearance, not prejudice. (However, νόμῳ φύσει.)²⁹ How did “prejudice” get this authoritative significance in the Age of the Enlightenment?

About this we receive a remarkable piece of information from a famous scholastic of the 12th century. This philosopher cites in an important context an enumeration by Alexander of Aphrodisias of the reasons for the differences of opinion in philosophy, for the difficulties of philosophizing. 3 reasons are dealt with there, which all express the *natural* difficulties of philosophizing, that is, such difficulties as exist *always*, at *all* times where human beings philosophize. Now, this scholar adds to this enumeration the following words:

In our time there exists a fourth reason, which he (*sc.*, Alexander of Aphrodisias) did not mention, since it did not exist among them; namely, *habit* and *schooling*; for human beings by nature love what they are habituated to and incline to it...this happens to man regarding the opinions in {456} which he has grown up: he loves them and holds on to them and stays away from differing opinions. For this reason as well, therefore, man is prevented from knowing the truth. This happens to the multitude regarding God’s corporeality...due to habituation in the *writings* in which one firmly believes and to which one is habituated, whose literal meaning seems to indicate God’s corporeality.³⁰

Now surely there were many Greek writings in which the gods were presented corporeally. Why did these writings not compromise Greek philosophy? It is therefore not being accustomed to writings in general, not having grown up in a tradition in general, but rather being accustomed to *very specific* writings, having grown up in a tradition of a *very specific* character: namely, in a tradition possessing an *authority* as *unconditional* as that of the *tradition of revealed religions*. The fact that a tradition based on revelation entered the world of philosophy increased the *natural* difficulties of philosophizing by adding the *historical* difficulty.

In other words: The natural difficulties of philosophizing have their classical depiction in Plato’s allegory of the cave. The historical difficulty may be illustrated by saying: there *now* exists another cave *beneath* the Platonic cave.

The Enlightenment’s whole fight against prejudices is in a sense sketched and thus anticipated in the cited statement from the 12th century. The statement sheds a

²⁸ Ger.: Aufhebung.

²⁹ Gk.: by convention, by nature.

³⁰ Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* I 31.

new light on this fight: the Enlightenment's fight against prejudices did not have the absolute meaning that the Enlightenment itself attached to it; and not because man always has and must have prejudices, but precisely the reverse, because prejudices in the strict sense of the word are only the "prejudices" of the revealed religions. This implies that the fight against prejudices has reached its end only when revealed religion has been called into question in its foundation and in its consequences.

If then the Enlightenment's fight against prejudices is only the fight against *the* historical difficulty of philosophizing, then the true goal of this fight is only: the recovery of philosophizing in its natural difficulty, of natural philosophizing, that is, of Greek philosophy. {457}

[Draft of an Alternative Introduction]

Preliminary Remark

We are all convinced that there is an unambiguous distinction between good and bad; therefore also between virtue and vice. Hence we distinguish between virtuous and vicious actions with the confidence of sleepwalkers. We are so sure of this distinction that we are even able to distinguish between virtuous and vicious *topics*. It is virtuous, say, to examine the questions of the sources of the collected Hippocratic writings or the connection between Hellenistic philosophy and the formation of Islamic sects; it is *still* virtuous if one grasps how Plato presents his teacher Socrates, or if one reconstructs a whole philosophical system from meager relics. To speak about vicious topics in public is not unobjectionable. Let it only be said that among the vicious topics there is nothing more vicious than the one we want to talk about tonight: the intellectual situation of the present. The proof of this is that a true scholar³¹ will never occupy himself with this question in his capacity as scholar; the scholar knows that making a conjecture or finding evidence of filiation is a much greater blessing than occupying himself with things that may be more interesting, but that can only be talked about vaguely. If scholars are the embodiment of virtue, then writers³² are the embodiment of vice. What we are attempting tonight is thus writer-like. And that is so by necessity. Imagine, if you please, that someone wanted to speak about the intellectual situation in the 14th century. In order to do this in the right manner, he would have to have studied for years; he would have to have become a specialist in the 14th century. Since without a doubt infinitely *more* is being written today than in the 14th century, how many years would someone have to have studied the intellectual situation of the present in order to be capable of treating it in a scholarly way. I have to confess for my part that I am far from being a specialist in the present. I am not embarrassed to say that I have never read nor heard a word by either Graf Keyserlingk or Margarete Susmann.³³ Not only will my claims often lack a sufficient material foundation—the claims will also often appear to you as in themselves confused {458} or otherwise defective. I am here—with asking for your indulgence.

³¹ See note 3.

³² Ger.: *Literaten*.

³³ See "Conspectivism" (appendix A), p. 219.

But why talk about such a matter at all, a matter that appears not to allow for scholarly treatment? Well—even the most virtuous man occasionally has the need to take a break from his virtue. Or, to say it less frivolously: it is good for even the most respectable scholar to put the books aside for once and do some thinking like a simple man of the people. Whatever he comes up with then does not need to be right, it does not need to be more than a reasonable conjecture; but it may be useful for his respectable work nonetheless.

Presupposing historical consciousness, the question concerning what is right compels the question concerning the situation of the present. Is this path *really* necessary? If all human thinking is in itself historical, then it has been arranged that we—when *we*, that is, men of *this* present world asking about what is right *as such*, believe we have found what is right *as such*—have thereby eo ipso found the answer that corresponds to our world, the *present* ideal of life. We cannot escape the *fate* of historicity—but we need not be concerned about that in our thought.

Fate as Principle

Historical consciousness must no longer be the *principle*. In what sense must historical consciousness be called into question? Insofar as it leads to the question concerning the situation of the present. It leads to this question only insofar as it is made the *principle* of questioning, insofar as it wants to be more than knowledge of the conditions and the fates of questioning.

Now, this path is in no way necessary. If everything human is in itself historically conditioned, then, without our needing to concern ourselves about it, it has been arranged that in searching for *the* ideal of life we are bound to find only the one that corresponds to our world, to the present, the *present* ideal of life. If everything human is itself historical, then *for just that reason* we do not need to be concerned with the historicity of our question. It is not the knowledge of historicity as such that leads to the explicit question concerning the present ideal of life and therefore concerning the situation of the present, but *incorporating* the knowledge of historicity, [i.e.,] historical consciousness, into the {459} question, making it the element, the presupposition, the *principle* of the question—when this knowledge in fact pertains only to the conditions and fates of questioning. But if the primary question of the human being who does not live in a binding given order is the question concerning a binding reasonable order, it is this *question* alone that must primarily occupy him and not the fate and the condition of this question. And only if it turns out that he cannot answer this primary question of his without considering the conditions and fates—*then and only then* does his historicity matter to him. That he needs this *detour*, however, must be demonstrated; it is not at all self-evident. Of course, we cannot avoid this detour today. Why that is the case, I will attempt to show, by³⁴

³⁴ Here Strauss's draft of an alternative introduction breaks off in mid-sentence.

[Plan of the Lecture in Draft]

1. The disreputability of the topic—the scholar adjusts his ambition to speaking only on topics with respect to which, as far as knowledge of the material and its intellectual penetration are concerned, he can step forth as if clad in iron armor. At least I for my part do not at all have the reassuring awareness—here no one can damage or hurt me, here I am a first-class expert—concerning the topic I am going to speak about tonight. Nevertheless it appears to me permissible to speak about it. For the iron armor of scholarship in each case clads a being scarcely made of iron, a human being who doubts. Not to voice these doubts because they themselves are unclear, as are the speculations that [come] from concerning oneself with these doubts³⁵
2. Why does the situation of the present matter to us Jews? → Impossibility of understanding “Law.” Reservations and prejudices.
3. a) Question *ambiguous*
 b) Question not *natural* but *historical*.
 c) Situation of the present characterized by the question concerning it. Why? Why not concerning situation in biblical time or Greek golden age?
 d) Destruction of the power of the tradition by the Enlightenment: {460} Enlightenment fights traditions in the name of the principles of the tradition.
 e) Nietzsche calls the principles into question: we are *totally* free. But for what?
 f) No binding principles any more. Radical ignorance, necessity of questioning.
 g) Being compelled to question as any age, we are less capable of questioning than any age.
 i) “Value judgments” not scientifically justifiable (according to Weber).—Free decision of the person, anarchy—does not take place in a vacuum, however, but is conditioned by *history*. *Historical consciousness*—seems to guarantee the overcoming³⁶ of anarchy.
 k) Meanwhile historical consciousness makes the question concerning the right life impossible—at best the *present* ideal of life → question concerning the intellectual situation of the present. Therefore: *situation of the present characterized by historical consciousness*.
 l) This question not capable of being answered. Hence no orientation, and consequently no life: we are incapable of living.
 m) Perversion and unnaturalness. But nevertheless we are *natural* beings—in that we *question*. Natural beings threatened in our naturalness by an unnatural world.

³⁵ [The text breaks off here in the middle of the line. LS has left blank a space of two lines to the next period and has noted in the left margin:] *Duckmäuserei in dem Nichtbehandeln des Themas* [cowardice/hypocrisy in the non-treatment of the topic] {HM}

³⁶ Ger.: *Überwindung*.

³⁷ Ger.: *aufgehoben*.

- n) Our unnaturalness shows itself to us in [the form of] historical consciousness insofar as this is understood in the way that it leads to the question concerning the situation of the present. Therefore: division of historical consciousness.
- o) Possibility of this division in principle: but not relapse into barbarism? Thus: historical consciousness has *progressed* when compared to *naïve* consciousness. That is: *Being fundamentally ignorant we cannot come to knowledge since we know too much, believe we know too much*. If, then, we are therefore to come to *knowledge*, then this belief in knowing must be overcome.³⁷ *Historical consciousness must be overcome insofar as it means: it itself constitutes as such a superior manner of knowing*.
- p) How do things really stand concerning our progressiveness? While the progressive tendency is primary, modern philosophy is always characterized by a countermovement—and not only as a condition independent of it, but as its condition proper.—State of *nature*. *Liberation from prejudices*. The meaning³⁸ of modern philosophy must be understood in light of this *fundamental* intention {461} of this philosophy.
- q) “Prejudice” and historical consciousness.
 - i) Historical consciousness can be interpreted by means of the category of “prejudice”.
 - ii) Prejudice a historical category.
RMbM³⁹ citation
- r) Natural and historical difficulties of philosophizing—the meaning of the fight against prejudices is liberation from the historical difficulties. First and second cave.
- s) Modern philosophy’s self-interpretation as progress hides this meaning completely. It leads to a continuous erosion of the tradition, in accordance with the intention of the reversionary tendency, while it leads at the same time to the consolidation of a new tradition—the modern tradition. A process of destruction that passes itself off as a process of construction.
- t) *Finally* one stands at the foundation of the tradition—one stands at the starting-point of the questioning from which the tradition has arisen—without knowing it, or in any case, without drawing the consequences from it. Nietzsche’s significance: Socratic question is not posed seriously, but is cut off by a dictate. Inner lack of clarity: Callicles⁴⁰ and intellect⁴¹ (order of humanity).
- u) In any case, Nietzsche has enabled us to understand the Socratic question again, to recognize it as *our* question. The Platonic dialogues are no longer *self-evident* for us—no longer self-evidently all right, no longer self-evidently wrong, surpassed, out of date, but we read them as if we were conducting them ourselves if we were capable of doing that.

³⁸ Ger.: *Sinn*. Likewise in subsections r) and s).

³⁹ That is, Maimonides. See note 8 of appendix B.

⁴⁰ Cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 481b–527e (esp. 482c–486d).

⁴¹ Ger.: *Geist*.

But we are not capable of doing that, since all the concepts that we *are equipped with* derive from the modern tradition. *This is what* we have to know—*this is why* we have to concern ourselves with the intellectual situation of the present. The question betrays the awareness of the fact that the question concerning what is right *cannot* be answered *without* being clear about our incapacity to question—but this question is fundamentally misguided if it is supposed to replace the real question.

The question concerning the intellectual situation of the present should serve {462} to awaken in us the willingness to come out of the cave of modernity—it is absurd if asked for its own sake: it would then amount to our describing the interior decor of the 2nd cave.

Historical consciousness has the function of leading us back to the natural questions. It is a self-misunderstanding of historical consciousness if it pretends to be a higher type of knowing.

v) *Plato and the Nomos and Revelation*

APPENDIX D

LEO STRAUSS: “A LOST WRITING OF FARÂBÎ’S” (1936)¹

Translated by Gabriel Bartlett and Martin D. Yaffe

In an article that appeared in the last volume of JQR, I. Efros tries to show that “the second of the three parts of (Falaquera’s) *Reshit hokmah*, entitled החלק השני במספר החכמות,² is a literal translation of the whole of Farâbî’s important work known as the ‘Encyclopedia’³ or by its Arabic title as *Ihşâ al-‘Ulûm*” (JQR, N.S., Vol. 25, p. 227).⁴ This assertion is in need of considerable qualification, which Efros manifestly neglected to undertake only because the editions of *Ihşâ al-‘ulûm* were not yet available to him.⁵

¹ [“Eine vermißte Schrift Farâbîs,” GS-2 167–77, 614.] First published in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Breslau, 1936), 80th annum, volume 1 (January), 96–106. The essay came into being from a handwritten submission in November 1935. {HM}

The originally published edition uses “Farâbî” throughout, rather than the more accurate “Fârâbî.” In a personal communication to the translators, Professor Heinrich Meier reports that Strauss did not correct the published spelling in the personal copy of the article in which he noted numerous remarks. For this reason, the translators have likewise retained “Farâbî” as Strauss’s spelling throughout the article.

² Heb.: “The Second Part in the Enumeration of the Sciences.”

³ I.e., what is now known as his *The Enumeration of the Sciences*. For a brief description, see Charles Butterworth’s introduction to the selection translated in Alfarabi, *The Political Writings: “Selected Aphorisms” and Other Texts*, trans. Butterworth (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 72f., or to that same selection as reprinted in MPP-2 18f. Strauss uses the then-received title *Encyclopedia* (or *Encyclopedia of the Sciences*) throughout.

⁴ I.e., Israel Efros, “Palaquera’s *Reshit Hokmah* and Alfarabi’s *Ihşâ’ al-‘Ulum*,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* n.s. 25 (London, 1934–35): 227–35.

⁵ For the editions available to Strauss but not to Efros, see note 21.

Reshit Chokhmah II falls into nine chapters (more exactly, “parts”), *Iḥṣā al-‘ulūm* into an Introduction and five chapters. The correspondence is

<i>Reshit Chokhmah</i> II	<i>Iḥṣā al-‘ulūm</i>
Chap. 1	Introduction
Chap. 3	Chap. 1
Chap. 5	Chap. 2
Chap. 6	Chap. 3
Chap. 7–8	Chap. 4
Chap. 9	Chap. 5

As this list leads one to suspect and the examination of the texts themselves confirms, the second and fourth chapters of *R. Ch.* II are not borrowed from Farābī’s *Encyclopedia*. The same goes for not inconsiderable parts of all the remaining chapters. Not borrowed from Farābī’s *Encyclopedia* are:

- in the 1st chapter: the 5th and 6th “uses” of the book (ed. David,⁶ 21.2–19);
- in the 3rd chapter: the explanation of *מדבק* and *פעל* שם (24.8–27.20);⁷ Falaquera himself says, in referring to this interpolation: *וצריך שנבאר זה אעפ שאין זה מכוונת זה* (24, 18–19);⁸
- in the 5th chapter: the last part (39.25–41.10). Falaquera himself says, in referring to this interpolation: *וכבר הארכתי וגו’* (41.8);⁹
- in the 6th chapter: the explanation of analysis and synthesis (43.14–28); {168}
- in the 7th chapter: the last part (51.24–53.9). Falaquera himself says, in referring to this interpolation: *ואלו הענפים לא זכרום מקצת הפילוסופים בזכרם מספר החכמות. ואני כד’* (53.8–9);¹⁰
- in the 8th chapter: the last part (54.19–55.30). The interpolation begins with the words: *ויש מי שחלק זו החכמה וגו’*;¹¹
- in the 9th chapter: the last part of the paragraph on political science (58.19–59.5).

The parts of chapters 7, 8, and 9 not taken from Farābī’s *Encyclopedia* are a (more or less literal) translation of the corresponding sections in Ibn Sīna’s *Encyclopedia* (*Iqṣām al-‘ulūm*).¹² I indicate the passages from Ibn Sīna’s writing according to the Latin translation by Alpagus (in: *Avicennae Compendium de anima etc.*, ab Andrea Alpagus...ex arabico in latinum versa, Venetiis 1546):

⁶Moritz David, ed., *Schemtov ben Josef ibn Falaqueras Propadeutik der Wissenschaften Reschith Chokmah* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1902).

⁷Heb.: noun, verb...preposition.

⁸Heb.: “And it is necessary that we explain this, although this is not part of the intention of this book.”

⁹Heb.: “And I have already spoken at length, etc.”

¹⁰Heb.: “And these are the branches. Some of the philosophers did not mention them when they mentioned the number of the sciences. But I have mentioned them so that the number would be complete.” (Reading *המספר* for *הספר*. Otherwise: “so that the book [*sic*] would be complete.”)

¹¹Heb.: “And there is someone who has divided this science, etc.”

¹²Ibn Sīna (Avicenna), *Fī aqṣām al-‘ulūm al-‘qliyyah* (Epistle on the Divisions of the Rational Sciences). Cf. Muḥsin Maḥdī’s introduction to a selection from it in *MPP*–1 95f., or to that same selection in *MPP*–2 74f.

R. Ch. II, chap. 7 (51.24–53.9)
 chap. 8 (54.19–55.30)
 chap. 9 (58.19–59.5)

Avicenna, ed. Alpagus, fol. 141–42
 fol. 143–44
 fol. 140b.¹³

In order to identify the source of the part of the third chapter that is not taken from Farâbî's *Encyclopedia*, one must consider that this section (24.8–27.20) treats the same subject as the greater part of the thirteenth chapter of Maimonides's *Millot ha-higgayon*,¹⁴ where, incidentally, a sentence is cited from Farâbî. The last section of the fifth chapter (39.25–41.10) is borrowed from Farâbî's writing on the purposes¹⁵ of Plato and Aristotle (see below, n. 39).

The most important supplement of Falaquera is the fourth chapter, which treats the genesis of the sciences.¹⁶ It cannot yet be proved at present that this chapter is a more or less literal translation of a section from a writing of Farâbî's. But it is indubitable that the same thoughts developed there go back to Farâbî. Let, for example, the conclusion of the chapter (30.28 ff.) be compared with the concluding part of *Iḥṣâ al-ʿulûm* (or with *Reshit Chokhmah* 59), or the immediately preceding passage (30.25–28)¹⁷ with Farâbî's *k. taḥṣîl al-saʿâda*,¹⁸ 39–42 (or with *Reshit Chokhmah* 70.17–19). Reminiscent of Farâbî {169} is, also and above all, the discussion occurring passim in this chapter pointing to the political function of science in that the

¹³For the last passage mentioned, cf. Strauss, *Philosophie und Gesetz* (Berlin: Schocken, 1935), 111 [= GS–2 112; *PLA* 122–23]. {LS}

¹⁴Heb.: *Logical Terms*. See Israel Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic* (New York: Academy for Jewish Research, 1938; reprint, Literary Licensing, LLC, 2011).

¹⁵The German *Tendenz* (*Tendenzen* in the plural) recurs frequently in Strauss's article and is rendered as either "purpose" or "tendency": when it refers to Farâbî's writing on Plato and Aristotle whose existence Strauss is inferring from Falaquera et al., it is "purpose(s)"; when it refers to the distinctive characteristics of Falaquera's own writing, it is "tendency."

¹⁶Handwritten marginal note in Strauss's personal copy: cf. Farâbî. *De ortu scientiarum* (ed. Baeumker), *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie* 41 (1938): 84 ff. Cf. Farmer, *Al-Farabi's Arabic-Latin writings on music*, 1934. {HM}

¹⁷This passage is, incidentally, the best key to the understanding of Maimonides's prophethology. Falaquera says there that the art of lawgiving is the art of representing figuratively, by means of the imagination, speculative concepts that are difficult for the multitude, and the means of bringing about those political activities that serve the attainment of happiness, and the amphibolous speech concerning those speculative and practical matters that are accessible to the multitude only in an amphibolous manner. This suggests, among other things, that the prophets' dependence (asserted by Maimonides as by the *Falâsifa*) on the perfection of the imagination is to be understood only on the basis of the political, lawgiving function of prophecy. {LS}

Handwritten marginal note in Strauss's personal copy: cf. Arist[otle] *Metaph[ysics]* 1074a38 and Alex[ander of] Aphr[odisias] as well as Averroës ad loc. {HM}

Handwritten marginal note on "amphibolous speech" in Strauss's personal copy: perhaps translation of إقناع (cf. *Reshit Chokhmah* 70.19) = "persuasion" {HM}

¹⁸The *k. taḥṣîl al-saʿâda* or *kitâb al-saʿâda* (*kitâb* = book) is translated into English by Muhsin Mahdi as *The Attainment of Happiness*, the first part of the trilogy whose existence Strauss is inferring in the present essay and which also includes *The Philosophy of Plato* and *The Philosophy of Aristotle*. See *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. Mahdi (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969; 2nd ed., 2001). Particularly as regards its second and third parts, Strauss refers to the trilogy in question usually as the "book" (or "writing") "on the purposes of Plato and Aristotle," and occasionally as "*The Two Philosophies*." His authorities here are Ibn al-Qifti (see notes 32–33) and Averroës (see notes 41–43), respectively.

sciences emerge in the *nation*, or rather in the nations. The same consideration also justifies the (provisional as well as hypothetical) attribution to Farâbî of the second chapter, which treats the genesis of language in the nations.

Falaquera's book is a decidedly Jewish book, whereas the model is not to the same degree an Islamic book. Thus there are no citations in Farâbî from the Qur'an or other Islamic sources corresponding to the Bible citations in *R. Ch.* II (54.4–5 and 54.15–17). The same difference shows itself perhaps most clearly in that, to the "uses" of an encyclopedia of the sciences enumerated by Farâbî, Falaquera adds the following two "uses" while remarking explicitly that both these "uses" would be of greater importance than the previous ones (*sc.*, borrowed from Farâbî):

1. a Hebrew encyclopedia of the sciences is necessary so that the loss of the "wisdom of our Sages," owing to the Galut, can be made up for again;¹⁹
2. "from this book it will become clear whether we are authorized by our Torah to learn these sciences (*sc.*, the ones about to be discussed) or not, or whether they contradict anything that is mentioned in our Torah....²⁰ This was the first intention in composing this book" (21.2–19).

Falaquera's determining interest, to prove the agreement between the doctrines of philosophy and the doctrines of the Law, is in no manner characteristic of Farâbî, as his {170} *Encyclopedia of the Sciences* shows in particular: according to Farâbî, the religious sciences (*fiqh* and *kalâm*) are no more than branches of political science. In this connection, let it be noted that Farâbî's explications of the *kalâm* are significantly shortened by Falaquera (*cf.* 59–60).

As interesting as this is in some respects, the fact that in the *second* part of *Reshit Chokhmah* the greatest part of Farâbî's *Encyclopedia* as well as significant parts of Ibn Sîna's *Encyclopedia* are preserved is of no special importance; for the originals have been edited and moreover are accessible in Latin translations that are more usable than Falaquera's Hebrew translation because they are more complete.²¹ It is otherwise as regards the *third* part of the *Reshit Chokhmah*; for this part, which contains the translation of Farâbî's book on the purposes of Plato and Aristotle, must replace the original, the greatest part of which is regarded, at least for the time being, as

¹⁹ Cf., in this connection, Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* I 71, beginning. {LS}

²⁰ As regards this order of the questions—*a.* legal permissibility of philosophizing, *b.* contradiction or agreement between philosophy and law—*cf.* my discussion of Ibn Rushd's *Faṣl al-maqāl* in *Philosophie und Gesetz*, 71 [= of Averroes's *Decisive Treatise*, in *GS*–2 70f.; *PLA* 84]. {LS}

²¹ *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm* was edited by [Uthmān] Amin, Cairo 1350 [A.H.], and A. G. Palencia, Madrid 1931 (*cf.* P. Kraus's review of this edition in *Islam* XXII 82–85) [= Paul Kraus, "Kleine Mitteilungen und Anzeigen: Angel Gonzáles Palencia, *Alfārābī Catálogo de las ciencias*," *Der Islam* 22 (1934): 82–85]. The Latin translation by Gerard of Cremona is reprinted in the Palencia edition.—*Iqṣām al-'ulūm* was edited in the collection of *Tis' rasā'il*, Istanbul 1298 [A.H.]. The Latin translation by Alpagus can be found in the collection of Alpagus cited above. {LS}

lost.²² Steinschneider has already suspected that the second and third parts of *Reshit Chokhmah* III might be taken from the aforementioned work of Farâbî's.²³ Now, after Farâbî's *k. taḥṣîl al-sa'ada* has been made available by the Hyderabad edition of 1345,²⁴ it can be proved that the entire third part of *Reshit Chokhmah* is a translation (albeit significantly abridged)²⁵ of Farâbî's book on the purposes of Plato and Aristotle.

The first part of *R. Ch. III* is a (incomplete) translation of Farâbî's *k. taḥṣîl al-sa'ada*. As proof, I first cite the beginnings of both works and then list the mutually corresponding passages.

Farâbî: "*Book on the Attainment of Happiness*. The human things that must be realized among the nations and the inhabitants of the cities, by means of which earthly happiness in the initial life and the highest happiness in that life can be realized, (fall into) four kinds: the speculative virtues, the cogitative virtues, the moral virtues {171}, and the practical arts. The speculative virtues are those sciences whose ultimate intention is solely this, that the beings and what they encompass become intelligible (νοητά)." ²⁶

Falaquera:²⁷ החלק הראשון בביאור הדברים ההכרחיים בהשיג ההצלחה: ואומר כי הפילוסופים זכרו שהדברים האנושיים אשר בהגיעם באומות ובאנשי המדינות תגיע להם עמהם הצלחת זה העולם בחיים הראשונים וההצלחה האחרונה בחיים האחרונים ארבעה סוגים והם השלמות העיוניים (והשלמות המחשביים) והשלמות המעשיים (היציריים: read: והמלאכה המעשית. והשלמות העיוניים הם החכמות אשר הכוונה האחרונה מהם שייגיעו עמהם הנמצאים מושכלים על אמיתתם בלבד.

²² See now, however, *Alfarabius De Platonis Philosophia (Falsafat Aflâtun)*, ed. Franz Rosenthal and Richard Walzer (London, 1943) and *Al-Fârâbî's "The Philosophy of Aristotle" (Falsafat Aristûâtâls)*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut, 1961), with Mahdi's editorial remarks in his *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 151–52. Cf. also note 51.

²³ *Alfarabi*, St. Petersburg, 1869, 176–178. [= Moritz Steinschneider, *Al-Fârâbî (Alpharabius), des arabischen Philosophen Leben und Schriften* (St. Petersburg, 1869).] {LS}

²⁴ See note 21.

²⁵ See notes 28 and 29.

²⁶ Cf. *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 13. In Strauss's German text, "intelligible" is the plural noun *Verstandenen*: "intelligibles." We have rendered it as a printer's error for *verstanden*.

²⁷ Heb.: "The first part in the explanation of the things necessary in the attainment of happiness: He says that the philosophers have mentioned that the human things by the attainment of which the nations and the people of the cities gain both happiness in the prior life of this world and final happiness in the afterlife are of four kinds: the theoretical virtues, (the deliberative virtues) the productive virtues, and the practical art. And the theoretical virtues are the sciences whose ultimate intention is that existing things thereby become intelligible by their truth alone."

(ed. Lippert, 278)³² about Farâbî's book "*On the Purposes (of the Philosophy) of Plato and Aristotle*," that this book, just like *R. Ch. III*, was formally divided into three parts: into an introduction, in which "the secrets and the fruits of the sciences" were investigated and "the gradual ascent" from science to science was discussed; "*thereupon* he (Farâbî) begins with the philosophy of Plato by communicating the purpose that he (Plato) pursues with it, and his (Plato's) writings about it; *thereupon* he has the philosophy of Aristotle follow this."³³ This description corresponds completely with *R. Ch. III*. At the conclusion of the edition of the *Tahṣîl*, the heading of the following part is given once more; it is: "The Philosophy of Plato, its Parts, and the Ranks of Order of its Parts, from First to Last."³⁴ The heading of the second part of *R. Ch. III*, בפילוסופית אפלטון וסדר, חלקיה מראש ועד סוף,³⁵ is manifestly the translation of this.

As regards in particular Farâbî's presentation of the philosophy of Aristotle in the work so named, according to the report of Ibn al-Qifti it was structured as follows: Farâbî

prefaces it (*The Philosophy of Aristotle*) with a significant introduction in which he {173} makes his (Aristotle's) gradual ascent to his philosophy known; thereupon he begins to describe his (Aristotle's) purposes with respect to his logical and physical writings, one book after the other, until his discussion about these things, in the manuscript we find, arrives at the beginning of theology (metaphysics) and the proof for this (*sc.*, for the necessity of metaphysics), resting as it does on physics.

The third part of *R. Ch. III* is structured exactly so: from an introduction that depicts Aristotle's path to his philosophy (78.6–80.9), there follows the presentation of logic (80.10–81.13) and physics (81.14–91.1), and finally the proof for the necessity of metaphysics, which rests on physics, and the beginning of metaphysics (91.1 to the end): metaphysics itself is absent in *R. Ch. III* also. This absence, incidentally, is not to be attributed to a corruption of the manuscripts, as Ibn al-Qifti seems to think, but it corresponds to Farâbî's plan:³⁶ whereas he characterizes his presentation of the philosophy of Plato with the words "We begin with the first part of the philosophy of Plato and follow the ranks of his philosophy, one after the other, until we have exhausted them altogether," he says with respect to his presentation of the philosophy of Aristotle only "We begin to present his philosophy

³² Ibn al-Qifti, *Ta'rikh al-hukamâ'*, ed. Julius Lippert (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903).

³³ The editor notes in connection with this: "That is all that we have found out about this book." {LS} The emphases in Strauss's quotation from Ibn al-Qifti in the text are Strauss's.

³⁴ Cf. *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 53.

³⁵ Heb.: "On the Philosophy of Plato and the Order of its Parts from Beginning to End."

³⁶ Handwritten marginal notes in Strauss's personal copy:

cf. *Cuzari* V 1, Thomas *ad EN* 1211; Efros' *RMbM* about Ab[raham] b[ar] Hiyya; Terminology s.v. חכמה ["Wisdom"]

cf. *Moreh* Introd.: Politics > Metaphysics > Physics.

See below, n. 54. {HM}

For "Efros' *RMbM*": see note 4.

from its first parts on.”³⁷ A complete presentation of the philosophy of Aristotle, therefore, was not at all intended by Farâbî.³⁸ And that is why the third part of *R. Ch. III* is a (by and large) complete translation of the third part of Farâbî’s book on the purposes of Plato and Aristotle. Even Falaquera’s sole deviation from the structure attested to by Ibn al-Qiftî of Farâbî’s work speaks for this conclusion: Falaquera does not enumerate the individual logical writings of Aristotle. But that they had been enumerated in his model, that this model therefore corresponds completely to Ibn al-Qiftî’s statements about the book in question by Farâbî, is proved by the fact that Falaquera, true to his habit, {174} explicitly justifies the omission of this enumeration:³⁹ ארסטו ונזכר (sc. בחכמת ההגיון) בה שחבר השמונה הספרים בחלק השני ובכבר זכרתי בחלק השני הספרים השמונה שחבר בה (בחכמת ההגיון) ארסטו ונזכר אותה בכאן בקצרה.⁴⁰

In Ibn Rushd’s *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, a writing of Farâbî is cited, “*The Two Philosophies*,”⁴¹ which is identical with the writing translated by Falaquera. The statement of Farâbî cited by Ibn Rushd from this writing can be identified in *R. Ch. III*.

Ibn Rushd:⁴² “*Una autem istarum opinionum est, quod agens creat formam, et ponit eam in materia.... Quidam dicunt quod illud agens invenitur duobus modis, aut abstractum a materia, aut non. Illud autem, quod est non abstractum apud eos, est sicut ignis, qui facit ignem, et homo generat hominem. Abstractum vero est illud quod generat animalia et plantas, quae fiunt non a simili. Et haec est sententia Themistii, et forte Alfarabii, secundum quod apparet ex suis verbis in duabus philosophiis: quamvis dubitet in ponendo hoc agens in animalibus generatis a patre et matre.*”⁴³

³⁷ Cf. *Alfarabi’s Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 50.

³⁸ Cf. also the similar break in the presentation after pointing from physics to metaphysics in *Tahṣīl* 12–14. Let it be pointed out at least in passing that, among other things, the conclusion of the Aristotle presentation in *R. Ch. III* 3 and the corresponding section in *Tahṣīl* (or in *R. Ch. III* 1, 64–65) agree in part literally. {LS}

³⁹ I.e., in *R. Ch.* 39.25–41. Falaquera has therefore taken up the relevant section of the book on the purposes of Plato and Aristotle into his adaptation of Farâbî’s *Encyclopedia*. That *R. Ch.* 39.25–41.10 is borrowed from the book on the purposes shows up also in that this passage is composed in the same narrative style that characterizes the book on the purposes: note the constantly recurring expression here, as there: ואחר כך עיין [“And afterwards he examined”] (or חקר [“he investigated”] or the like). {LS}

⁴⁰ Heb.: “And I have already mentioned in the second part the eight books that Aristotle composed in it [sc., in the science of logic], and we will recall it here in brief.”

⁴¹ Handwritten marginal note on “*The Two Philosophies*” in Strauss’s personal copy: (sc., the exoteric and the esoteric philosophy!) {HM}

⁴² *ad Metaph.* XII (comm. 18, fol. 143, col. 2, l. 27–39). The passage is, incidentally, of importance also for demarcating Farâbî’s teaching from Ibn Sina’s. {LS}

⁴³ Lat.: “One of these opinions, however, is that the agent creates the form and places it in matter.... Certain people say that this agent is found in two modes, either remote from matter, or not. For them, however, the [agent] that is not remote is like fire that makes fire, and man generates man. In truth, the remote [agent] is the one that generates animals and plants, which are not made from [something] similar. And this is Themistius’s view, and perhaps Farâbî’s according to what appears from his words in *The Two Philosophies*: in any case, he would hesitate to place this agent in animals generated by a father and mother.”

... ורבים מהנפשים יתנו אל החמרים אשר יפגשו אשר ימנם הטבע להם נפש כי האדם הוא: Falaquera
אדם היה לפניו אדם והאדם מאדם וכמו כן בבעלי חיים (...) מה שאינו בבעלי חיים ומהצמחים מי שאינו מצמח
והגופים המחצביים אינם נהיים מהדומים להם במין ועל כן צריך לחקור אותו אלו ויותר מזה לחקור מי
שנתן האנושית על דרך כלל והדומה לזה משאר בעלי חיים וצורת מין ומין ... ועל כן צריך לחקור מי
שנתן צורת אותו המין ועל דרך כלל מי שנתן צורת המינים אם הם הגופים השחוקים או השכל הפועל או
יהיה השכל הפועל נותן הצורה והגופים השחוקים נתנו תנועות החמרים. ⁴⁴ (90.22–31)

By this agreement, that *R. Ch. III* is a translation of Farâbî's writing on the purposes of Plato and Aristotle should be proved completely. {175}

This writing can therefore be reconstructed to some extent if a rule is first secured for the use of those parts of it that are preserved only in Falaquera's translation. ⁴⁵ This rule can be obtained by observing Falaquera's tendency and technique in his adaptation of *k. taḥṣīl al-sa'āda* and *Iḥṣā al-'ulūm*. Falaquera in general translates very literally. Often, however, he leaves out significant parts of the original, occasionally by making known his deviation from the original. The supplements are easy to recognize as such in general, without the comparison with the original being necessary (or even only possible). ⁴⁶ Above all, if one considers the fact that most of Falaquera's supplements stem from the tendency characteristically distinguishing him from Farâbî, to prove the agreement between the doctrines of philosophy and those of the Law. This tendency was pointed out above in examples from his adaptation of the *Iḥṣā al-'ulūm*. It shows itself also in his adaptation of the *Taḥṣīl*. ⁴⁷ The fact that in the *Taḥṣīl* is found an explanation of "Imâm" (43.9–17) that Falaquera left untranslated merely appears to contradict this; for with this explanation Farâbî is pursuing the by no means believing, but philosophical intention of leading away from the Islamic givens and toward the Platonic doctrine of the

⁴⁴ Heb.: "And many of the animate [beings] give to the materials that they encounter, [provided] that nature has prepared them, a soul, as a man has been [originated] from another man before him, who has been [originated] from a man, and in like manner with the animals.... Some among the animals, and plants that are not [originated] from a plant, and the mineral bodies, are not [originated] from what is similar to them in species, and therefore it is necessary to investigate these things, and moreover to investigate who gave the human [soul] in general, and similarly [the souls] of the rest of the animals and the form of each and every species.... And therefore it is necessary to investigate who has given the form of this particular species and in general who has given the forms of the species, whether it is the heavenly bodies or the Active Intellect, or whether it has been the Active Intellect giving the form and the heavenly bodies have given the movements of the materials."

⁴⁵ That *R. Ch. III* 1 might be of use for establishing the text of the *Taḥṣīl* is to be noted in passing. {LS}

⁴⁶ 72.21–25: ומצאנו גר: ["and we have found, etc."]; 75.22–26: וראה לי גר: ["and it has seemed to me, etc."]; 77.3–11: ראינו גר ונשוב למה שהיינו בו: ["we have seen, etc., and let us return to where we were"]. The last example is especially important because, through this remark of Falaquera's, it is ascertained that the preceding report about Plato's *Republic* stems from his model. {LS}

⁴⁷ Cf. in particular the supplements at 68.13–15 and 71.11–13. {LS}

Handwritten marginal note in Strauss's personal copy: 65.32: האלוה יתה—cf., in contrast, *taḥṣīl* 15, par. 2, lines 1–2 {HM}

philosopher-king: "The meaning of Philosopher and First Leader and King and Lawgiver and Imâm is one and the same."⁴⁸

Since, therefore, Farâbî's book on the purposes of Plato and Aristotle is able to be reconstructed, and since his *Encyclopedia of the Sciences*, his *Political Regime*,⁴⁹ and his book on the political regimes⁵⁰ have been edited,⁵¹ his central writings are thus preserved and available. The interpretation of his doctrine is therefore possible. A sufficient proof that it is necessary, however, is the statement of *Maimonides*'s about the "second teacher."⁵² Maimonides writes to the translator of his *Moreh nebuchim*:⁵³ "Do not concern yourself with any books of logic other than those the wise Abû Naşr al-Farâbî has composed. For {176} everything he has composed in general, and his *The Principles of Beings*⁵⁴ in particular—everything is pure flour." And he immediately adds that the books of Ibn Sîna, with all their merits, cannot compare with those of Farâbî. It is time that the conclusions from this authoritative

⁴⁸ Handwritten marginal note in Strauss's personal copy: cf. Razi on Socrates as his Imâm (Kraus in *Orientalia* 1935) [= Paul Kraus, "Raziana I," *Orientalia* N.S. 4 (1935), 300–34]. {HM}

⁴⁹ Lit.: *Perfect State*. Strauss uses the German title *Musterstaat*, in reference to the Arabic text edited by Friedrich Dieterici, *Alfarabi's Abhandlung der Musterstaat* (Leiden, 1895). See the following note and notes 53 and 54.

⁵⁰ On the apparent redundancy here, cf. Muhsin Mahdi's introduction to a selection from Alfarabi's *The Political Regime* in MPP-1 31: "[The *Political Regime*] is known by two titles: the *Principles of Beings* (or the *Six Principles*) and the *Political Regime*. The first title seems to have been extracted from the opening passage of the work, which gives the impression that it is a treatise on the principles of the natural world and their respective ranks of order: 1) the First Cause, 2) the Second Causes, 3) the Active Intellect, 4) the soul, 5) form, and 6) matter. The entire first part of the work consists of an account of these six principles and of how they constitute the bodies and their accidents. Only when one proceeds to the second part (the human and political part...) does one perceive that this account is an introduction to, and a preparation for, an account of political life and a classification of political regimes. Alfarabi wrote a parallel book, the *Principles of the Opinions of the Citizens of the Virtuous City*, which discusses the same themes in similar terms. As the titles indicate, however, the *Political Regime* is concerned more with regimes or constitutions, whereas the *Virtuous City* is concerned more with the opinions of the citizens in these regimes." See also note 54.

⁵¹ As regards the edited texts of the *Encyclopedia [sc., Enumeration] of the Sciences* and the *Political Regime*, see notes 3 and 49; also, Muhsin S. Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 241, 243. As regards the edited text of "the book on the political regimes" (sc., the *Virtuous City*), see *idem*, 244.

⁵² On this term, cf. Mahdi's Introduction to *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 4f.: "Alfarabi's scientific or philosophic works proper—his commentaries, especially his large commentaries, on individual works by Plato and Aristotle...established his reputation as the greatest philosophical authority next to Aristotle (Alfarabi was known as the 'Second Master')....Many of these works seem to be lost; the ones that have survived remain for the most part hardly ever studied; and the few that have been edited deal with specialized subjects whose relevance to the general character of Alfarabi's thought and of Islamic philosophy is not easy to establish."

⁵³ I.e., *Guide of the Perplexed*. The translator is Samuel ibn Tibbon. Cf. Joel L. Kraemer, *Maimonides* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 438–43.

⁵⁴ The authentic title of this book is *The Political Regimes*. It consists of two parts, the first of which treats the hierarchy of the cosmos, the second of which treats the hierarchy of the city. Structured in the same manner is the book on the perfect state, which in the manuscripts of the British Museum and the Bodleian Library is described simply as a "political book." {LS}

explanation about the true proportions be drawn for the understanding of the Islamic and Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages: At the beginning of this epoch of the history of philosophy there stands not just any “predecessor,” but the towering spirit who laid the ground for the later development and set down its limits by making his task the revival of Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy as philosophy proper.

APPENDIX E

LEO STRAUSS: “ON ABRAVANEL’S CRITIQUE OF MONARCHY” (1937)¹

Translated by Martin D. Yaffe

H. Finkelscherer, in an essay that appeared in the last annum of this journal,² has made the assertions that one of the most important antimonarchist arguments of Abravanel, and “a quite similar attitude” toward the Judean monarchy, are to be found “already in Joseph ibn Caspi.” That the attitude of both authors is quite similar must be contested: Finkelscherer himself immediately notes the “difference in tone between Caspi’s aristocratic–philosophical ideal and Abravanel’s theocratic one” (81st annum, p. 506). On the other hand, the assertion that Abravanel’s argumentation agrees with Caspi’s requires more serious consideration.

For Abravanel in any case, the most important part of his antimonarchical argumentation, i.e., the one that is decisive for the whole question, is his explanation of Deut. 17:14f., according to which this passage expresses no command to appoint a king but merely a permission to do so. More precisely: he compares the provision regarding the appointment of the king with the provision regarding the *אֶשֶׁת יִפְתָּחָר*.³ Accordingly, the sense of the crucial biblical passage is: if you should have and express the wish, against the divine will, to appoint a king over yourselves, then you should not appoint as king over yourselves him whom you wish, but

¹[Leo Strauss, “Zu Abravanel’s Kritik des Königtums,” GS–2 233–34, 615.] Unpublished. Typescript with entries and corrections in Strauss’s hand. 2 pages, in the possession of Jenny Strauss Clay. Strauss’s annotations refer to the essay by Herbert Finkelscherer, “Quellen und Motive der Staats- und Gesellschaftsauffassung des Don Isaak Abravanel,” in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Breslau, 1937), 81st annum, 496–508, and had evidently been intended as a brief review for publication in this journal. Whether Strauss in fact sent the contribution to the editorial office is not known. {HM}

²See the previous note.

³Heb.: “beautiful-looking woman” (Deut. 21:11).

him whom God will choose. Caspi says quite similarly (on Deut. 17:14): **צום שלא ישימוהו רק אשר יבחר יי' על פי נביא**.⁴ Is this statement of Caspi's necessarily saying, however, that the appointment of the king is not commanded but only permitted? He is certainly not in any way comparing the provision regarding the appointment of the king with the provision regarding the beautiful-looking woman, but with the provisions regarding sacrifice (on I Sam. 8:6). He is thus pointing, as Last⁵ as well as {234} Finkelscherer rightly remarks, to Maimonides's explanation of the sacrificial legislation. The explanation given in *Moreh*⁶ III 32, which both Last and Finkelscherer have in mind, says: sacrifices do not correspond to the first intention of the divine lawgiver, they are therefore not simply good, but they were ordained only with respect to the ignorance of the people at that time, they are therefore only conditionally good. This explanation by no means implies, however, that sacrifices, being ordained as only conditionally good, are not commanded but only permitted. And therefore Caspi is in no way asserting as Abravanel does, undoubtedly in the wake of Ibn Ezra, that the appointment of the king is not commanded but only permitted.

There is only one way to vindicate Finkelscherer's assertion: one would have to show that Caspi in fact considered the entire sacrificial legislation to be non-obligatory. In other words: one would have to show that his words **למנות מלך מצוה ג"כ** **כענין הקרבן**⁷ contain a silent allusion not to *Moreh* III 32 but to *Moreh* III 46. For in the latter chapter (III 102a–b, Munk)⁸ Maimonides says in plain words: "If we do not perform this mode of worship at all, I mean the sacrifices, then we commit no sin whatever." Caspi, the thoroughgoing connoisseur of the *Moreh*, may very well have been thinking of this somewhat more isolated remark, and not of the much more famous expositions of *Moreh* III 32, when he compared the law of the king with the sacrificial laws. But that he was actually thinking of that remark would need proof. Only if this proof were supplied would one be obliged to assert definitively that Caspi really has anticipated the decisive antimonarchical argument of Abravanel.

⁴Heb.: "And he commanded them not to appoint him, except one whom the Lord will choose by the say-so of a prophet." Quoted by Finkelscherer, 506.

⁵Finkelscherer, 506n58, quotes I. H. Last's edition of Caspi's commentary on the Prophets, *Adney Kesef* (2 vols.; London, 1911–12), vol. I, 15, on I Sam. 8:6: **אין ראו לפי התורה שיהיה לעמו מלך לשפוטם** ("It is not proper according to the Torah for our people to have a king to judge them"); Last's editorial footnote *ad loc.* notes Caspi's allusion to Maimonides's *Moreh*. At 506n57, Finkelscherer cites Last's edition of Caspi's commentary on the Torah *Matzref la-Kesef* (Krakow, 1906) on Deut. 17:14, i.e., as the source for Caspi's view expressed in the sentence translated in note 4. And at 506n60, Finkelscherer again cites Caspi's *Adney Kesef* on I Sam. 8:6, as the source for the sentence translated in note 7, which Finkelscherer, 506, quotes with Caspi's words **כענין הקרבן** ("like the matter of sacrifice") emphasized.

⁶I.e., *Guide [of the Perplexed]*. Strauss uses the traditional Hebrew title.

⁷Heb.: "And to appoint a king is a commandment, just like the matter of sacrifice." See note 5.

⁸Maïmonide, *Le Guide des égarés*, ed. and trans. S[alomon] Munk (3 vols.; Paris, 1856–66; nouv. éd., Paris, 1970).

APPENDIX E

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Jeffrey A. Bernstein

In 1937, Leo Strauss wrote two essays on the thought of Don Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508 CE)—“On Abravanel’s Philosophical Tendency and Political Teaching” and “Zu Abravanel’s Kritik des Königtums” (translated as “On Abravanel’s Critique of Monarchy” in appendix E of the present volume).¹ These two essays present a lens through which one sees Strauss’s engagement with later medieval Jewish thinkers as it displays a newfound emphasis (characteristic of his writings in the 1930s) on political philosophy and medieval rationalism. Further, as Joshua Parens shows in chapter 8 of our volume, Strauss’s engagement with Abravanel also discloses his first significant treatment of “the main line of Christian political thought” as distinguished from the Jewish and Islamic variety (the exemplary instance of which is the thought of Maimonides).

Around one month before the present volume went to press, I came across a 43-page set of undated handwritten notes (in Box 20, Folder 14 of the Leo Strauss Archive, Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago) the significance of which bears directly on both essays from 1937.² Five pages of the manuscript, divided into three distinct sections, deal with Abravanel’s commentary on I Samuel (Chapter 1, Verses 4–35). The first section carries the heading “Abrabanel’s Kommentar zum Buche Samuël” while the next two sections simply state “Abrabanel ad Samuël”. The remaining 38 pages deal with Abravanel’s commentary on I Kings (Chapters 1 and 17–20). Given the degenerated state of some of the pages, it is difficult to provide definitive sections for the entire group; that said, the overwhelming majority of pages can be sectionalized according to the designations that occur as book number-scriptural book-chapter-subscript verse—for

¹ See GS-2 195–227 and 233–34, respectively.

² I would like to thank Nathan Tarcov and the Special Collections Department at the Regenstein Library for allowing me to conduct research there. I would also like to thank Martin D. Yaffe, Richard S. Ruderman, and Timothy W. Burns for inviting me to briefly present my findings in the present context.

example, 1Reg17₄ (“Reg” being the abbreviation for “Regnum”—the conventional Latin designation for the scriptural book). The manuscript as a whole,³ therefore, contains materials covered in both Abravanel essays.

One of the distinctive qualities about “On Abravanel’s Philosophical Tendency” is its reference to many classical Jewish commentaries on the Hebrew Bible. These occur, in that essay, largely in the notes and in one paragraph.⁴ “On Abravanel’s Critique of Monarchy” (probably as a result of the scholarly focus and brevity of Strauss’s treatment) makes no mention of these commentaries. From reading only those essays, one might question how substantive a role these commentaries play in Strauss’s treatment of Abravanel. The handwritten notes provide the following information: At least with respect to I Samuel and I Kings (which texts figure directly in “On Abravanel’s Philosophical Tendency” and, by implication, in “On Abravanel’s Critique of Monarchy”), Strauss was working extremely closely with the rabbinic commentaries. The notes largely assume a form similar to that of the *Miqra’ot Gedolot*.⁵ He provides a verse, notes certain significant Hebrew terms, provides Abravanel’s commentary on said verse, and then provides commentary on the same verse from the *Midrash Tanhuma*, the *Targum* by Onkelos (ca. 35–120 CE), Solomon ben Isaac (“Rashi,” 1040–1104 CE), David Kimchi/Qimchi (“Radak/Radaq,” 1160–1235 CE), and Levi ben Gershom/Gersonides (“Ralbag,” 1288–1304 CE). Strauss employs the conventional (German) shorthand for these commentators and texts, hence, “Tanchuma,” “Raschi,” “RDK”/“RDQ,” and “RLBG.”

Strauss’s notes do not provide similar commentary from Maimonides; neither do they provide analogous commentary from Christian sources (some of whom Abravanel would have been familiar with), or philosophical analogues and/or divergences.⁶ The question as to the occasion for which these notes were composed thus remains open.⁷ Regardless of whether the notes were taken in specific preparation for the Abravanel essays or taken earlier and simply used in those essays, they offer an instructive glimpse into Strauss’s workroom and show readers the scrupulous attention to detail that marked Strauss’s philosophical practice before, during, and after the reorientation that he underwent in the 1930s.

³Listed on the Special Collections website as “Arabic Notebook ‘Biblical Book of Kings.’”

⁴¶26 in *Isaac Abravanel: Six Lectures*, ed. J. B. Trend and H. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 123; ¶28 in *Leo Strauss On Maimonides: The Complete Writings*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2013), 607. Readers should note that Green’s edition follows the GS.

⁵That is, the “large format Bible,” which provides verse-by-verse commentary supplied by the *Targumim* (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible) and *Rishonim* (medieval Jewish scriptural commentators).

⁶This is significant only insofar as “On Abravanel’s Philosophical Tendency” deals with Abravanel’s divergence from the medieval Jewish adoption of Platonic political philosophy in favor of a more explicitly Aristotelian standpoint characteristic of medieval Christian thought.

⁷Thomas Meyer (Wake Forest University) suggests that the handwriting in the notes dates from Strauss’s early Berlin years (1926–27). If this is correct, it opens up research possibilities into the possible differences between his treatment of classical Jewish sources in 1) the 1920s, 2) his path through “Jewish Thomism” (GS–3 765) in *Philosophie und Gesetz*, and 3) the Abravanel essays.

EDITORIAL NOTE TO APPENDICES F AND G

Hannes Kerber

Strauss left among his papers three versions of the fragment¹ “Exoteric Teaching”—a four-page manuscript (M) written on both recto and verso in blue ink,² a 19-page typescript (TS),³ and its carbon copy (CC).⁴ The two typewritten versions are nearly identical⁵ but bear many different handwritten corrections in pencil, red crayon, and black ink by Strauss and at least one other person.

An edition based on TS was published with some editorial revisions by Kenneth Hart Green in 1986.⁶ M and CC, however, throw new light on the genesis of the essay. Further, a comparison of the typewritten versions with M strongly suggests that the typist was not Strauss himself. Nor can TS be considered authoritative since Strauss did not prepare the essay for publication. The deviations from M, most of which occur in the last part of the essay, can therefore not be regarded with certainty as Strauss’s deliberate corrections but may be among the many errors made by the typist that were missed by Strauss when he looked over TS and CC. (For example, it is not clear whether Strauss wanted to leave out the second part of footnote XXXVI in the typewritten version or whether he simply did not notice the typist’s failure to transcribe it.)

¹ In M, TS, and CC, the first paragraph is numbered “I.” However, this numeral was later crossed out in both TS and CC. Likewise, the last line in M is the numeral “II,” which was not copied by the typist.

² Leo Strauss Papers (Box 17, Folder 2), Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. M is written on paper of the Union College, Schenectady, NY. In the top right-hand corner of the first page of M, Strauss initially wrote in blue ink “Dec., 1, 1939—”. Later he crossed this out and wrote, in pencil, “Dec., 1939: I.”

³ Leo Strauss Papers (Box 23, Folder 8).

⁴ Leo Strauss Papers (Box 14, Folder 12). In the top right-hand corner of the first page of CC, “Carbon not corrected” was written in a hand other than Strauss’s.

⁵ The last two pages of TS were replaced by two pages written on a different typewriter. These pages take into account most of the corrections that appear in CC. Also, the text of footnote VI cannot be found in CC while the superscripted number is in the main text.

⁶ *Interpretation* 14, no. 1 (1986): 51–59. A more heavily edited version was included in *RCPR* 63–71.

This edition takes TS, which Strauss corrected more carefully than CC, as the basis from which it notes deviations from M and CC. It notes as well any handwritten corrections in the body of the text in the three versions. In the text of Strauss's own footnotes, however, I have noted only obviously significant deviations and handwritten corrections in order to preserve readability. Typographical or reading errors that were later corrected, minor variations in comma placement, orthographical inconsistencies in German or French quotations, and discrepancies due to the fact that Strauss used British spelling while the typist nearly always used American spelling, have been corrected silently. Words underlined, by hand or by typewriter, have been italicized.

Editorial revisions are kept to a minimum. In a few cases, mainly in Strauss's footnotes, I have corrected errors made by the typist and overlooked by Strauss on the basis of the manuscript.⁷ Only in a handful of cases did I find emendations of Strauss's text indispensable.⁸

All footnotes with Roman numerals are Strauss's; those with Arabic numerals as well as all additions in square brackets are my own. The great number of deviations and handwritten corrections in all three of the versions compelled resorting to abbreviations in the apparatus. Therefore, I have adopted a simple system: 1) The deviations from TS have been indicated by a reference to the source, followed by the deviation. For example, the note "M: has" to the word "had" in the body of the text is to be read as "the manuscript reads 'has' (whereas the typescript and the carbon copy read 'had')." 2) The handwritten corrections have been indicated with a reference to the source, followed by the original word, an arrow and the correction. For example, the note "M: popular → public" to the word "public" in the body of the text is to be read as "in the manuscript, 'popular' was replaced with 'public' (which was adopted by the typescript)." All corrections in M are Strauss's but it is not always clear whether the corrections in TS and CC were made by Strauss or by someone else. Therefore, I have only identified those handwritten corrections that can be attributed with certainty to Strauss.

The two plans for "Exoteric Teaching" (Supplements 1 and 2, below)⁹ reveal that Strauss initially intended to write a much longer essay. They map out additions to the existing text as well as details of the second part of the essay, which Strauss never carried out. Even though the plans cannot be dated precisely, it seems fairly

⁷ For example, TS has in footnote I "120ff." while M has "120f." In similar cases, I have restored the reading of M in fn II: edd. → eds. / fn III: Lessing' → Lessing's / fn VII: and "The ordinary distinction between offensive and defensive wars is quite empty." (*Loc. cit.*, §§ 60 and 276) → (*Philosophische Sittenlehre*, § 60) and "The ordinary distinction between offensive and defensive wars is quite empty." (*Loc. cit.*, § 276) / fn IX: 34ff. → 34f. / fn XIV: 153ff. → 153f. / fn XXXI: 44ff. → 44f. / fn XXXIII: bonds → bands / proportionately → proportionally.

⁸ Cf. the editorial comments in fn 280n53, XXIII, XXIV, XXVI, and fn 283n82. In accordance with the original text, a few minor mistakes in the quotations in fn IV, XXXIII and XXXVII were corrected. Cf. Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, edited by Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24f., 29 and 177.

⁹ Leo Strauss Papers (Box 17, Folder 2). The first paragraph of an earlier draft of the essay, also entitled "Exoteric Teaching" can be found on the back of the later plan. An even earlier version, entitled "Exoteric Literature," and a third plan, entitled "Exoteric teaching," can be found in the same folder.

clear that the second one was written at a later time since it is both more detailed and closer to the part of “Exoteric Teaching” that was finished.

A third supplementary document (appendix G) consists of a closely related set of notes. On December 6, 1939, while working on “Exoteric Teaching,” Strauss gave a lecture titled “Persecution and the Art of Writing” at Union College, Schenectady, NY.¹⁰ Among his papers, Strauss left a five-page manuscript (of which four pages have survived) with elaborate notes for a lecture of the same title.¹¹ These notes seem to be an *aide-mémoire* and some of the writing has been crossed out.¹² Like the two plans, the lecture notes are of an essentially private character and should therefore be read in the light of Strauss’s published works. In the hope of making this task easier for the reader, I have annotated these documents extensively but by no means exhaustively, while I have kept the editorial notes for “Exoteric Teaching” to a minimum.

★ ★ ★

The bulk of this work was made possible by a generous grant provided by the German National Merit Foundation for the academic year 2010/2011. I am very grateful to Robert B. Pippin for inviting me to spend that year with the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Nathan Tarcov, Leo Strauss’s literary executor, has kindly given his permission for the publication and has supported me constantly. I am indebted to Wiebke Meier, Svetozar Minkov, and Devin Stauffer for help in deciphering some of Strauss’s hieroglyphs, to Stuart D. Warner, William Wood, and especially to Jeremy Bell for friendly critique, as well as to Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman for giving me the opportunity to publish such a lengthy critical edition. To Heinrich Meier and Ralph Lerner, who have encouraged me from the very beginning with their insights and advice, I am deeply grateful.

¹⁰ Cf. Leo Strauss to Jacob Klein, November 28, 1939, in GS–3 586. As Heinrich Meier has kindly informed me, Strauss noted in the margin of his own copy of the article “Persecution and the Art of Writing” that he gave lectures on the topic in October and December 1939 as well as in February, March, and April 1940.

¹¹ Leo Strauss Papers (Box 17, Folder 2).

¹² Deletions by LS are indicated by chevrons (“<...>”) and additions by the editor in square brackets (“[...]”).

APPENDIX F

LEO STRAUSS: EXOTERIC TEACHING (1939)

Edited by Hannes Kerber

Le partage du brave homme est d'expliquer librement ses pensées. Celui qui n'ose regarder fixément les deux pôles de la vie humaine, la religion et le gouvernement, n'est qu'un lâche.

—Voltaire.¹

The distinction between exoteric (or public²) and esoteric (or secret) teaching is not at present considered to be of any significance for the understanding of the thought of the past: the leading encyclopedia of classical antiquity does not contain any article, however brief, on *exoteric* or *esoteric*. Since a considerable number of ancient writers had³ not a little to say about the distinction in question, the silence of the leading encyclopedia cannot possibly be due to the silence of the sources; it must be due to the influence of modern philosophy on classical scholarship; it is that influence which prevents scholars from attaching significance to numerous⁴, if not necessarily correct, statements of ancient writers. For while it is for classical scholars to decide whether and where⁵ the distinction between exoteric and esoteric teaching occurs in the sources, it is for philosophers to decide whether that distinction is significant in itself. And modern philosophy is not favorable to an affirmative answer to this philosophic question. The classical scholar Zeller may have believed to have cogent reasons for rejecting the view that Aristotle “designedly chose for (his scientific publications) a style obscure and unintelligible to the lay mind”; but it must be doubted whether these reasons would have appeared to

¹“It is the lot of the brave [or decent] man to explain his thoughts freely. He who does not dare to look directly at the two poles of human life, religion and government, is only a coward.” Quoted with some alterations from Voltaire, *L’A, B, C, ou Dialogues entre A, B et C* (dixième entretien, sur la religion), in *Dialogues et Anecdotes Philosophiques*, edited by Raymond Naves (Paris: Garnier, 1939), 304.

²M: popular → public

³M: has

⁴M: important → numerous

⁵TS/CC: when → where

him equally cogent, if he had not been assured by the philosopher Zeller that the rejected view “attributes to the philosopher a very childish sort of mystification, wholly destitute of any reasonable motive.”¹

As late as the last third of the 18th century, the view that all the ancient philosophers had distinguished between their exoteric and their esoteric teaching was still maintained, and its essential implications were fully understood at least by one man. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing united in himself in a unique way the so divergent qualities of the philosopher and of the scholar. He discussed the question of exotericism clearly and fully in three ‘little’ writings of his: in “Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen” (1773), in “Des Andreas Wissowatius’ Einwürfe wider die Dreieinigkeit” (1773) and in “Ernst und Falk” (1777 and 1780).¹¹ He discussed it as clearly and as fully as could be done by someone who still accepted exotericism not merely as a strange fact of the past, but rather as an intelligible necessity for all times and, therefore, as a principle guiding his own literary activity.¹¹¹ In short, Lessing was the last writer who revealed, while hiding them, the reasons compelling wise men to hide the truth: he wrote between the lines about the art of writing between the lines.

In “Ernst und Falk,” a character called⁷ Falk, who expresses himself somewhat evasively and sometimes even enigmatically, tries to show that every political constitution, and even the best political constitution⁸, is necessarily imperfect: the necessary imperfection of all political life makes necessary the existence of what he calls free-masonry, and he does not hesitate to assert that free-masonry, which is necessary, was always in existence and will always be. Falk himself is a free-mason, if a heretical⁹ free-mason, and in order to be a free-mason, a man must know truths which ought better to be concealed.^{1V} What¹⁰ is then the concealed reason of his view that all political life is necessarily¹¹ imperfect?^V The intention of the good

¹ *Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics* (translated by Costelloe and Muirhead), London 1897, I 120f.

⁶ Added by LS in M between the lines or in the margins.

¹¹ See Lessing, *Werke*, eds. Petersen and von Olshausen, VI 21–60 (“Ernst und Falk”) and XXI 138–189 (the two other treatises mentioned above). Compare also Lessing’s “Über eine zeitige Aufgabe” (XXIV 146–153).

¹¹¹ Lessing’s exotericism was recognized to a certain extent by Gottfried Fittbogen, *Die Religion Lessings*, Leipzig 1923, 60ff. and 79ff. Fittbogen does not however see the most important implications of his valuable remarks, since his interpretation of Lessing is based on a Kantian or post-Kantian view of the meaning of philosophy.

⁷ TS: character, called → character called [correction not in CC]

⁸ M: and even the absolutely best political constitution [This part of the sentence was not transcribed by the typist. LS reinserted it in TS and CC. However, he dropped the word “absolutely.”]

⁹ M: heretic → heretical

^{1V} “Falk. Weißt du, Freund, daß du schon ein halber Freimäurer bist?...denn du erkennst ja schon Wahrheiten, die man besser verschweigt. Ernst. Aber sagen *könnte*. Falk. Der Weise *kann* nicht sagen, was er besser verschweigt.” Second Dialogue, *loc. cit.*, p. 31. [“Falk: Do you know, friend, that you are already half a free-mason?...because you already realize truths which are better to be concealed. Ernst: But which *could* be said. Falk: The wise man *cannot* say what he would do better to conceal.”]

¹⁰ TS: Which → What [correction not in CC]

¹¹ M: necessarily is

^V In the 3rd dialogue (p. 40), it is explicitly stated that only such shortcomings of even the best political constitution have been explicitly mentioned as are evident even to the most shortsighted eye. This implies that there are other shortcomings of political life as such which are not evident to “shortsighted eyes.”

works of the free-masons is to make good works superfluous,^{VI} and free-masonry came into being^{VII} when¹² someone who originally had planned a scientific society which should make the speculative truths useful for practical and political life conceived¹³ of a “society which should raise itself from the practice of civil life to speculation.”^{VIII} The concealed reasons¹⁴ of the imperfection of political life as such are the facts¹⁵ that all practical or political life is essentially inferior to contemplative life, or that all works, and therefore also all good works, are “superfluous” as far as the level of theoretical life, which is self-sufficient, is reached, and that the requirements of the lower are bound from time to time to conflict with, and to supersede in practice, the requirements of the higher. Consideration of that conflict is the ultimate reason why the “free-masons” (i.e. the wise or the men of contemplation¹⁶) must conceal certain fundamental truths. It may be added that Lessing points out in “Ernst und Falk” that the variety of religions is due to the variety of political constitutions^{IX}: the religious problem (i.e. the problem of historical, positive religion) is considered by him as part and parcel of the political problem.¹⁷

In “Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen” and in “Wissowatius,” Lessing applies these views to an explanation of Leibniz’ attitude toward religion. The explicit purpose of these two little treatises is to discuss “the motives and reasons” which had induced Leibniz to defend certain orthodox beliefs (the belief in eternal damnation and the belief in trinity).^X While defending Leibniz’ defense of the belief in eternal damnation, Lessing states that Leibniz’ peculiar way of assenting to received opinions is *identical*¹⁸ with “what all the ancient philosophers used to do in their exoteric speech.”^{XI} By making that statement, he not only asserts that all the ancient philosophers made use of two manners of teaching, of an exoteric manner and an esoteric manner; he also bids us¹⁹ *trace back*¹⁸ all essential features of Leibniz’ exotericism to the exotericism of the ancients. What, then,

^{VI} 1st dialogue (at the end) and 3rd dialogue (p. 39).

^{VII} The contradiction between the statement made at the beginning that free-masonry is always in existence, and the statement made toward the end that free-masonry came into being at the beginning of the eighteenth century enables us to see that free-masonry is an ambiguous term. [In M the sentence is concluded: “...18th century shall enable us to see that ‘free-masonry’ is an ambiguous term, and that the secret meaning of that term indicates what ought to be called in unmetaphoric language—philosophy.” In TS/CC the conclusion reads differently (“...ambiguous term, and that the secret meaning of the term is ‘philosophy.’”) and was crossed out by LS.]

¹² TS: being, when → being when [correction not in CC]

¹³ TS: life, conceived → life conceived [correction not in CC]

^{VIII} 5th dialogue (toward the end).

¹⁴ M: reason → reasons

¹⁵ M: is the fact → are the facts

¹⁶ M: speculation → contemplation

^{IX} 2nd dialogue (p. 34f.).

¹⁷ M: (i.e. the problem of positive religion) is a part of the political problem → (i.e. the problem of historical, positive religion) is considered by him as part and parcel of the political problem

^X *Werke*, XXI 143 and 181.

¹⁸ Italics added in TS (correction not in CC).

^{XI} *Loc. cit.*, 147.

¹⁹ TS: bids us to → bids us [correction not in CC]

²⁰ TS/CC: Which are, then, → What, then, are

are²⁰ the essential features of Leibniz' exotericism? Or, in other words, what²¹ are the motives and reasons which guided Leibniz in his defense of the orthodox or received opinion?^{XII} Lessing's first answer to this question is that Leibniz' peculiar way of assenting to received opinions is identical with "what all the ancient philosophers used to do in their exoteric speech. He observed a sort of prudence for which, it is true, our most recent philosophers have become much too wise."^{XIII} The distinction between exoteric and esoteric speech has then so little to do with "mysticism" of any sort that it is an outcome of prudence. Somewhat later on Lessing indicates the difference between the esoteric reason enabling²² Leibniz⁶ to⁶ defend²³ the orthodox doctrine of eternal damnation, and the exoteric reason expressed in²⁴ his defense²⁵ of that doctrine.^{XIV} That exoteric reason, he asserts, is based on the mere possibility of eternally increasing wickedness of moral beings²⁶. And then he goes on to say: "It is true, humanity shudders at this conception although it concerns the mere possibility. I should²⁷ not however for that reason raise the question: why frighten with a mere possibility? For I should²⁸ have to expect this counterquestion: why not frighten with it, since it can only be frightful to him who has never been earnest about the betterment of himself." This implies that a philosopher who makes an exoteric statement, asserts, not a fact, but what Lessing chooses to call "a mere possibility": he does not, strictly speaking, believe in the truth of that statement (e.g. of the statement that there is²⁹ such a thing as eternally increasing wickedness of human beings which would justify eternally increasing punishments). This is indicated by Lessing in the following remark introducing a quotation from the final part of Plato's *Gorgias*: "Socrates himself believed in such eternal punishments quite seriously, he believed in them at least to the extent³⁰ that he considered it expedient³¹ to teach such punishments in terms which do not in any way arouse suspicion and which are most explicit."^{XV}

Before proceeding any further, I must summarize Lessing's view of exoteric teaching. To avoid the danger of arbitrary interpretation, I shall omit all elements of that view which are not noticed³² at a first glance even by the most superficial

²¹TS/CC: which → what

^{XII} Cf. *loc. cit.*, 146.

^{XIII} *Loc. cit.*, 147. Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 180c7–d5, with *Protagoras* 316c5–317c5 and 343b4–5.

²² M: underlying → enabling

²³ M: defence of → defend

²⁴ M: underlying → expressed in

²⁵ M: explicit defence → defence

^{XIV} *Loc. cit.*, 153f.

²⁶ M: a moral being → moral beings

²⁷ M: shall

²⁸ M: shall → should

²⁹ In M "is" is italicized.

³⁰ M: at least so far

³¹ M: expedient (*zuträglich*)

^{XV} *Loc. cit.*, 160. Cf. also the remarks about "believing" on pp. 184, 187, and 189. [In M this footnote begins: "Or: 'in terms which are least open to suspicion and most explicit' ('mit den unverdächtigsten und ausdrücklichsten Worten')."—For a different translation of the same passage, cf. *PAW* 183.]

³² M: evident → noticed

reader of Lessing, although the obvious³³ part of his view, if taken by itself, is somewhat enigmatic. 1) Lessing asserts that all the ancient philosophers and Leibniz^{XVI} made use of exoteric presentation of the truth, as distinguished from its esoteric presentation. 2) The exoteric presentation of the truth makes³⁴ use of statements which are considered by the philosopher himself statements, not of facts, but of mere possibilities. 3) Exoteric statements (i.e. such statements as would not⁶ and could not⁶ occur within the esoteric teaching) are made by the philosopher for reasons of prudence or expediency. 4) Some³⁵ exoteric statements are addressed to morally inferior people who ought to be frightened by such statements. 5) There are certain truths which must³⁶ be concealed. 6) Even the best political constitution is bound to be imperfect. 7) Theoretical life is superior to practical or political life. The impression created by this summary, that there is a close connection between exotericism and a peculiar attitude toward political and practical life, is not misleading: “free-masonry,” which⁶ as such⁶ knows of secret truths, owes its existence to the necessary imperfection of all practical or political life.

Some readers might be inclined to dismiss Lessing’s whole teaching at once, since it seems to be based on the obviously erroneous, or³⁷ merely traditional,^{XVII} assumption that *all* the ancient philosophers have³⁸ made use of exoteric speeches. To warn such readers, one must point out that the incriminated sentence permits of a wholly unobjectionable interpretation: Lessing implicitly denies that writers on philosophical³⁹ topics who reject exotericism, deserve the name of philosophers.^{XVIII} For he knew the passages in Plato in which it is indicated⁴⁰ that it was⁴¹ the sophists who refused to conceal the truth.

After Lessing, who died in the year in which Kant published his *Critique of Pure Reason*, the question of exotericism seems to have⁴² been lost sight of almost completely, at least among scholars and philosophers as distinguished from novelists. When Schleiermacher introduced that style of Platonic studies, in which classical scholarship is still engaged, and which is based on the identification of the natural order of Platonic dialogues with the sequence of their elaboration, he still had to discuss in detail the view that there are two kinds of Platonic teaching, an exoteric

³³ M: evident or obvious → obvious

^{XVI} In a private conversation, published only after his death, Lessing said to F. H. Jacobi about Leibniz: “Es ist bei dem größten Scharfsinn oft sehr schwer, seine eigentliche Meinung zu entdecken.” *Werke*, XXIV 173. [“With the greatest ingenuity it is often very difficult to discover his real opinion.”]

³⁴ M: may make → makes

³⁵ M: At least some → Some

³⁶ M: ought better → must

³⁷ M: and → or

^{XVII} Compare Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, V [ch. IX] 58 (365 Stählin).

³⁸ M: had → have

³⁹ M: philosophic

^{XVIII} Cf. for a similar example of Lessing’s way of expressing himself his *Briefe antiquarischen Inhalts* VII (*Werke*, XVII 97ff.).

⁴⁰ M: made clear → indicated

⁴¹ M: were

⁴² M: has → seems to have

kind and an esoteric one. In doing this, he makes five or six extremely⁴³ important and true remarks about Plato's literary devices,^{XIX} remarks the subtlety of which has, to my knowledge, never been surpassed or even rivaled since. Yet he failed to see the crucial question. He asserts that there is only one Platonic *teaching*¹⁸—the teaching presented in the dialogues—although there is, so to speak, an infinite number of levels⁴⁴ of the understanding of that teaching⁴⁵: it is the same teaching which the beginner understands inadequately, and which only the perfectly trained student of Plato understands adequately⁴⁶. But is then the teaching which the beginner actually understands⁴⁷ identical with the *teaching*¹⁸ which the perfectly trained student actually understands? The distinction between Plato's exoteric and esoteric teaching had sometimes been⁴⁸ traced back to Plato's opposition to "polytheism and popular religion" and to the necessity⁶ in which he found himself⁶ of hiding that opposition; Schleiermacher believes he has⁴⁹ refuted this view by asserting that "Plato's principles on that topic are clear enough to read in his writings, so that one can scarcely believe that his pupils might have needed still more information about them."^{XX} Yet, "polytheism and popular religion" is an ambiguous expression:⁵⁰ if Schleiermacher had used the less ambiguous expression⁵¹ "belief in the existence of the gods worshipped by the city of Athens," he could not have said that Plato's opposition to that belief is clearly expressed in his writings.⁵² As a matter of fact, in his introduction to his translation of Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, he considers it a weak point of that writing that Plato has not made more energetic use of the argument taken from Socrates's service to Apollo, for refuting the charge that Socrates did not believe in "the⁵³ old gods."^{XXI} If Plato's Socrates believed⁵⁴ in "the old gods," is not Plato himself likely to have believed in them as well? And how can one then say that Plato's opposition to "polytheism and popular religion"

⁴³ M: very → extremely

^{XIX} F. Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke*, I 1, Berlin 1804, 20 (3. Auflage, Berlin 1855, 16). [The references to the third edition in footnotes XIX, XX, and XXI were added by LS between the lines in CC, but not in TS. In footnote XXII, LS made no reference to the third edition.]

⁴⁴ M: degrees [In TS and CC, LS inserted "degrees" between the lines without crossing out "levels."]

⁴⁵ TS/CC: understanding that teaching → the understanding of that teaching

⁴⁶ M: perfectly → adequately

⁴⁷ TS: understands, → understands [correction not in CC]

⁴⁸ M: be

⁴⁹ M: to have

^{XX} *Loc. cit.*, 14 (3rd ed. Berlin 1855, 12).

⁵⁰ In M, one and a half sentences which originally preceded this sentence were crossed out: "But he forgets the fact that Plato has not written his dialogues for his pupils only, but rather as a possession for all times, or that not all readers of Plato are pupils of Plato. Yet this refutation is based on."

⁵¹ Omitted in TS, but later inserted by LS. (Correction not in CC.)

⁵² In M a sentence originally following this sentence was crossed out: "And is not that belief some sort of 'polytheism and popular religion'?"

⁵³ In TS and CC, but not in M, the opening quotation marks were placed in front of "a weak point..." because the typist wrongly took the opening quotation marks in the sentence that was crossed out (cf. n52) to indicate the beginning of the quotation in this sentence.

^{XXI} *Platons Werke*, I 2, Berlin 1805, 185 (3. Aufl., Berlin 1855, 128).

⁵⁴ TS/CC: has believed → believed

as such is clearly expressed in his writings? Schleiermacher's strongest argument against the distinction of two teachings of Plato appears to be his assertion that Plato's 'real' investigations are hidden, not absolutely, but only from the inattentive readers, or that attention⁵⁵ is the only prerequisite for a full understanding of his real investigations as distinguished from those investigations which are merely the "skin" of the former.^{XXII} But did any man in his senses ever assert that Plato wished to hide his secret teaching from all readers or from all men? Did any man whose judgment can claim to carry any weight in this matter ever understand by Plato's esoteric⁵⁶ teaching anything other than that teaching of his dialogues which escapes the inattentive readers only? The only possible difference of opinion concerns exclusively the meaning of the distinction between inattentive and attentive readers: does a continuous way⁵⁷ lead from the extremely inattentive reader to the extremely attentive reader, or is the way between the two extremes interrupted by a chasm? Schleiermacher tacitly assumes that the way from the beginning to the end is continuous, whereas, according to Plato, philosophy presupposes a real conversion⁵⁸,^{XXIII} *i.e.*¹⁸ a total break with the attitude of the beginner: the beginner is a man who has not yet for one moment left the cave, and who has even never⁵⁹ turned his eyes away from the shadows of man-made things⁶⁰ toward the exit of the cave, whereas the philosopher is the man who has left the cave and who (if he is not compelled to do otherwise) lives⁶¹ outside of the cave, on "the island of the blessed."⁶² The difference between the beginner and the philosopher (for the perfectly trained student of Plato is no one else but the genuine philosopher) is a difference not of degree, but of kind. Now, it is well-known that, according to Plato, virtue is knowledge or science; therefore, the beginner is inferior to the perfectly trained student of Plato not only intellectually, but also morally. That is to say, the

⁵⁵ M: the attention → attention

^{XXII} "Das geheime...(ist) nur beziehungsweise so..." I 1, 12.—"...die eigentliche Untersuchung wird mit einer anderen, nicht wie mit einem Schleier, sondern wie mit einer angewachsenen Haut überkleidet, welche dem Unaufmerksamen, *aber auch nur diesem*, dasjenige verdeckt, was eigentlich soll beobachtet oder gefunden werden, dem Aufmerksamen aber nur noch den Sinn für den inneren Zusammenhang schärft und läutert." *Loc. cit.*, 20. (The italics are mine.) ["The secretive...(is) only relatively so..."; "...the actual investigation is covered with another, not as if with a veil but as if with a grown-on skin, which conceals from the inattentive [reader] but only from him that which actually ought to be observed or found, but which for the attentive [reader] sharpens and chastens the sense for the internal coherence."]

⁵⁶ M: secret or esoteric → esoteric

⁵⁷ In TS, "path" was written (not by LS) between the lines, and a question mark in the margin.

⁵⁸ M: "conversion" → conversion

^{XXIII} *Republic* 518c–e and 521e [recte: 521c]. Cf. also *Phaedo* 69a–c. [In TS and CC, LS added "and 619c–d" to the references to the *Republic*. However, in M he inserted the reference in footnote XXIV. Cf. FP 361n11 and CM 27n34.]

⁵⁹ M: not even → even never

⁶⁰ In M, Strauss added "of men and man-made things" in the margin. The typist dropped "men and."

⁶¹ M: and prefers the life → and who lives → and who (if he is not compelled to do otherwise) lives

⁶² M: cave, the life on "the island of the blessed" to the life in the cave → cave, on "the island of the blessed"

morality⁶³ of the beginners has a basis essentially different from the basis on which the morality of the philosopher rests: their virtue is not⁶⁴ genuine virtue, but vulgar or political virtue only,⁶⁵ a virtue based not on insight⁶⁶, but on customs or laws.^{XXIV} We may say, the morality of the beginners is the morality of the “auxiliaries” of the *Republic*, but not yet the morality of the “guardians.” Now, the “auxiliaries,”⁶⁷ the best among whom are the beginners, must believe⁶⁸ “noble lies,”^{XXV} *i.e.*⁶⁹ statements which, while being useful for the political community, are nevertheless lies. And there is a difference not of degree but of kind⁷⁰ between truth and lie or untruth. And what holds true of the difference between truth and lies⁷¹ holds equally true of the difference between esoteric and exoteric teaching; for Plato’s exoteric teaching is identical with his “noble lies.” This connection of considerations, which is more or less familiar to every reader of Plato, if not duly emphasized by all students of Plato, is not even mentioned⁷² by Schleiermacher in his refutation of the ⁶view that there is a⁶ distinction between Plato’s exoteric and esoteric teaching. Nor does he,⁷³ in that context, ⁶as much as allude⁶ to Lessing’s dialogues (“Ernst und Falk” and Lessing’s conversation with F. H. Jacobi) which probably come closer⁷⁴ to the spirit⁷⁵ of the Platonic dialogues and their technique than any other modern work in the German language⁷⁶. Therefore Schleiermacher’s refutation⁷⁷ of the view in question is not convincing. A comparison of his *Philosophic Ethics* with the *Nicomachean Ethics* would bring to light the reason^{XXVI} why he failed to pay any attention to the difference between the morality of the beginner and the morality of the philosopher, *i.e.*¹⁸ to the difference which is at the bottom of the difference between exoteric and esoteric teaching.

I return to Lessing. How was Lessing led to notice,^{XXVII} and to understand, the information about the fact ⁶that⁶ “all the ancient philosophers” had distinguished

⁶³ M: basis of morality → morality

⁶⁴ M: is not, and cannot be, → is not

⁶⁵ Originally, footnote XXIV was placed after “only.” LS made the correction in M in pencil.

⁶⁶ M: philosophy → insight

^{XXIV} *Republic* 430c3–5, 619c–d and *Phaedo* 82a10–b8. [LS inserted in M, but not in TS/CC, “*Rep.* 619c–d.” Cf. the comment to footnote XXIII.]

⁶⁷ M: “auxiliaries”

⁶⁸ TS/CC: believe in → believe

^{XXV} *Republic* 414b4ff. Cf. *Laws* 663d6ff.

⁶⁹ TS/CC: *i.e.* in → *i.e.* [italics added in TS, correction not in CC]

⁷⁰ TS/CC: is no difference of degree, but of kind, → is a difference not of degree but of kind

⁷¹ M: lie,

⁷² M: as much as alluded to → even mentioned

⁷³ M: he pay any attention, → he,

⁷⁴ TS/CC: come probably nearer → probably come closer

⁷⁵ M: spirit of the technique → spirit

⁷⁶ TS/CC: in the German language does → in the German language [The five words were added between the lines in M.]

⁷⁷ M: refutation is not convincing → refutation

^{XXVI} That reason can be discovered by an analysis of the following statements, *e.g.*: “Knowledge of the essence of reason is ethics” (*Philosophische Sittenlehre*, § 60) and “The ordinary distinction between offensive and defensive wars is quite empty.” (*Loc. cit.*, § 276).

^{XXVII} Cf. the remarks of the young Lessing on the relevant passage in Gellius (XX 5) in the tenth *Literaturbrief* (*Werke*, IV 38).

between their exoteric and their esoteric teaching? If I am not mistaken, he rediscovered the bearing of that distinction by his own exertion after having⁷⁸ undergone his conversion⁷⁹, *i.e.*¹⁸ after having had⁸⁰ the experience of what philosophy is and what⁸¹ sacrifices it requires. For it is that experience which leads in a straight way to the distinction between the two groups of men, the philosophic men and the unphilosophic men, and therewith to the distinction between the two ways of presenting the truth. In a famous letter to a friend,^{xxviii} he expresses his fear that “by throwing away certain prejudices, I have thrown away a little too much that I shall have to fetch back⁸².”^{xxix} That passage has sometimes been understood to indicate that Lessing was about to return from the intransigent rationalism of his earlier period toward a more positive view of the Bible and the Biblical tradition. There is ample evidence to show that this interpretation is wrong.^{xxx} The context of the passage makes it clear that the things which Lessing had “thrown away” before and which, he feels, he ought to “fetch back” were truths which he descried “from afar” in a book by Ferguson, as he believed on the basis of what he had seen in the table of contents of that book. He also descried “from afar” in Ferguson’s book “truths in the continual contradiction of which we happen to live⁸³ and we have to go on living continually in the interest of our quietude.” There may very well be a connection between the two kinds of truth⁸⁴: the truths which Lessing⁸⁵ had thrown away formerly⁸⁶ may have been truths contradictory to the truths⁸⁷ generally accepted by the philosophy of enlightenment⁸⁸ and also accepted by

⁷⁸CC: having had

⁷⁹M: “conversion” → conversion

⁸⁰TS: *i.e.* after having made → *i.e.* after having had [correction not in CC]

⁸¹TS/CC: which → what

^{xxviii}To Moses Mendelssohn, of January 9, 1771.

⁸²LS inserted between the lines in M, without crossing out “to fetch back,” the alternative translation “get back again” (which was adopted by TS/CC). In the margin of the manuscript he put an exclamation mark. My decision to retain the first translation is supported by LS’s use of this translation a few lines later.

^{xxix}Another statement about the crisis which Lessing underwent when he was about forty, occurs in the *Briefe antiquarischen Inhalts*, LIV (*Werke*, XVII 250).

^{xxx}See e.g. von Olshausen in his introduction to *Werke*, XXIV 41ff.—Compare also Jacobi’s letter to Hamann of December 30th, 1784: “Als (Lessings) Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts... von einigen für eine nicht unchristliche Schrift, beinahe für eine Palinodie angesehen wurde, stieg sein Ärger über die Albernheit des Volkes bis zum Ergrimmen.” (F. H. Jacobi, *Werke*, I 398). [“When (Lessing’s) *Education of the Human Race*... was considered by some as a not un-Christian writing, [but] almost as a palinode, his anger about the absurdity of the people grew to the point of fury.”]

⁸³brM: actually live → happen to live [In M, a few sentences of this paragraph (“The context of the passage... he ought to ‘fetch back’ are ‘truth in the continual contradiction of which we have to live’; such truths he descried ‘from afar’ in a book by Ferguson as he believed on the basis of what he had seen in the table of content of that work.”) were crossed out by LS. He inserted a red cross in crayon in the margin. The passage that is reproduced in TS and which differs slightly from M is to be found on a brown slip of paper (brM), which also has a red cross in crayon in the margin.]

⁸⁴brM: truths

⁸⁵brM: L.

⁸⁶TS: formerly, → formerly [correction not in CC]

⁸⁷brM: those → the truths

⁸⁸brM: his enlightened contemporaries → the philosophy of enlightenment

Lessing throughout his life.⁸⁹ At any rate,⁹⁰ two years later he openly rebuked the more recent philosophers who had evaded the contradiction between wisdom and prudence by becoming much too wise to submit to the rule of prudence which had been observed by Leibniz and all the ancient philosophers. External evidence is⁹¹ in favor of the view that the book referred to by Lessing⁹² is Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*.^{xxxI} The "truths in the continual contradiction of which we have to live," which had been discussed by Ferguson and which are indicated to a certain extent in the table of contents of his *Essay*,^{xxxII} concerned the ambiguous character of civilization, *i.e.*¹⁸ the theme of the two famous early writings of Rousseau, which Lessing, as⁹³ he perhaps felt, had not considered in his youth carefully enough.⁹⁴ ^{xxxIII} Lessing expressed his view of the ambiguous character of civilization "some years later"⁶ in these more precise terms: even the absolutely best civil constitution is necessarily imperfect. It seems then to have been⁹⁵ the political problem⁹⁶ which gave Lessing's thought a decisive turn away from the philosophy of enlightenment indeed, yet not toward romanticism of any sort—toward what is called a deeper, historical view of government and religion⁹⁷—, but toward an older type of philosophy. How near he apparently came to certain romantic views on his way from the philosophy of enlightenment to that older type of philosophy⁹⁸ we may learn from what F. H. Jacobi tells us in an essay of his which is devoted to the explanation of a political remark made by Lessing. According to Jacobi, Lessing once said⁹⁹ that the arguments against Papal¹⁰⁰ despotism are either no

⁸⁹LS inserted "and accepted also by Lessing throughout his life" in the margin of brM. However, "also" was dropped by the typist.

⁹⁰brM: At any rate, he censured → At any rate,

⁹¹M: decides → is

⁹²M: in question → referred to by L.

^{xxxI} Cf. von Olshausen, *loc. cit.*, 44f., who however rejects this conclusion on the basis of "internal reasons."

^{xxxII} Cf. e.g. the following headings of sections: "Of the separation of arts and professions" [part IV, sect. 1] and "Of the corruption incident to polished nations" [part VI, sect. 3].

⁹³Inserted in TS/CC.

⁹⁴M: dismissed in his youth somewhat too rashly → not considered in his youth carefully enough

^{xxxIII}The influence of Ferguson's mitigated Rousseauism on Lessing can be seen from a comparison of the following quotations with what Lessing says in "Ernst und Falk" on the obvious reasons of the necessary imperfection of all civil societies. Ferguson says in Part I, section 3 and 4: "The mighty engine which we suppose to have formed society, only tends to set its members at variance, or to continue their intercourse after the bands of affection are broken." "The titles of *fellow-citizen* and *countryman*, unopposed to those of *alien* and *foreigner*, to which they refer, would fall into disuse, and lose their meaning." "...it is vain to expect that we can give to the multitude of a people a sense of union among themselves, without admitting hostility to those who oppose them." See also Part IV, section 2: "...if the lot of a slave among the ancients was really more wretched than that of the indigent labourer and the mechanic among the moderns, it may be doubted, whether the superior orders, who are in possession of consideration and honours, do not proportionally fail in the dignity which befits their condition."

⁹⁵M: At any rate, it was → It seems then to have been

⁹⁶M: question → problem

⁹⁷M: society and religion → government and religion

⁹⁸TS: philosophy, → philosophy [correction not in CC]

⁹⁹M: had remarked → once said

¹⁰⁰M: papal

arguments at all, or else they are two or three times as valid against the despotism of princes.^{xxxiv} Could Lessing have held¹⁰¹ the view that ecclesiastical despotism is two or three times better than secular despotism?¹⁰² Jacobi elsewhere says in his own name¹⁰³ but certainly in the spirit of Lessing, that that despotism which is based “exclusively”¹⁰⁴ on superstition, is less bad than secular despotism.^{xxxv} Now, secular despotism could easily be allied¹⁰⁵ with the philosophy of enlightenment, and therewith with the rejection of exotericism strictly speaking, as is shown above all by the teaching of the classic of enlightened despotism: the teaching of Hobbes. But “despotism based exclusively on superstition,” *i.e.*¹⁸ not at all on force, cannot be maintained if the non-superstitious minority does not voluntarily refrain from ‘openly’⁶ exposing and refuting the “superstitious” beliefs¹⁰⁶. Lessing had then not to wait for the experience of Robespierre’s despotism to realize the relative truth of what the romantics asserted against the principles of J.-J.¹⁰⁷ Rousseau who seems to have¹⁰⁸ believed in a political solution of the problem of civilization: Lessing realized that ‘relative’⁶ truth one generation earlier¹⁰⁹, and he rejected it in favor of the way leading to absolute truth, or of philosophy. The experience which he had¹¹⁰ in that moment enabled him to understand the meaning of Leibniz¹¹¹ “prudence” in a manner infinitely more adequate than the enlightened Leibnizians among his contemporaries did and could do. Leibniz is then that link in the chain of the tradition of exotericism which is nearest to Lessing. Leibniz, however, was not the only 17th century thinker who was initiated. Not to mention the prudent Descartes,¹¹² even so bold a writer as Spinoza had admitted the necessity of “pia dogmata, hoc est, talia quae animum ad obedientiam movent”¹¹³ as distinguished from “vera

^{xxxiv} Jacobi, *Werke*, II 334 (“Etwas das Lessing gesagt hat”). Jacobi quotes in that article Ferguson’s *Essay* extensively. [Cf. Jacobi, “Something that Lessing Said,” translated by Dale E. Snow, in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, edited by James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 198.]

¹⁰¹ M: Lessing held then → Should Lessing have held

¹⁰² M: despotism. → despotism?

¹⁰³ M: name,

¹⁰⁴ M: exclusively (“einzig und allein”)

^{xxxv} Jacobi, *Werke*, III 469. Cf. Lessing’s “Gespräch über die Soldaten und Mönche” (*Werke*, XXIV 159).

¹⁰⁵ M: reconciled → allied

¹⁰⁶ M: and attacking the increasing “superstitions” → and attacking “superstitions” → and refuting “superstitious” beliefs

¹⁰⁷ TS/CC: J.J. → J.-J.

¹⁰⁸ TS: who had → who seems to have

¹⁰⁹ M: before → earlier

¹¹⁰ TS/CC: made → had

¹¹¹ M: Leibniz’s

¹¹² Here a footnote was added in M by LS in pencil but not transcribed by the typist: “The early Cartesians distinguished the ‘exoteric’ *Discours de la méthode* from the ‘acroamatic’ *Meditations*. Cf. É. Gilson’s commentary on the *Discours* (Paris 1930, p. 79). Cf. e.g. *Discours de la méthode*, sixième partie, *in princ.*: writing, being an action, is subject to religious and political authority, but thought is not.” See *Discourse on Method*, trans. Richard Kennington (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 2007), 48.

¹¹³ *Tractatus theologicus-politicus*, cap. 14, § 20 (Bruder). The quotation is taken from a longer sentence: “Sequitur denique, fidem non tam requirere vera, quam pia dogmata, hoc est, talia, quae animum ad obedientiam movent; tametsi inter ea plurima sint, quae nec umbram veritatis habent, dummodo tamen

dogmata.”^{xxxvi} But Lessing did not have¹¹⁴ to rely on any modern or¹¹⁵ medieval representatives of the¹¹⁶ tradition:¹¹⁷ he was familiar with its sources. It was precisely his intransigent classicism—his considered view that close study of the classics is the only way in which a diligent and thinking man can become a philosopher^{xxxvii}—which had led him, first, to notice the exotericism of some ancient¹¹⁸ philosophers, and later on to understand the exotericism of all the ancient philosophers.

is, qui eadem amplectitur, eadem falsa esse ignoret; alias rebellis necessario esset.” (“It follows, finally, that faith does not require true dogmas so much as pious ones, that is, such as move the spirit toward obedience—even though among them there may be very many that do not have even a shadow of truth, yet so long as he who embraces them is ignorant of their being false. Otherwise he would necessarily be rebellious.” Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. Martin D. Yaffe (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 2004), 164.) Cf. also SCR 171; PAW 180; GS–2 199.

^{xxxvi} *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, cap. 14, § 20 (Bruder). [In M the footnote continues: “Cf. cap. 15 towards the end. See also *Tract. de int. emend.* § 17 and 14 and Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 12 and 46.”—The reference to the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* was inserted in M between the lines.—Cf. PAW 35n17.

¹¹⁴ M: Lessing had not

¹¹⁵ M: and → or

¹¹⁶ M: that

¹¹⁷ In M this sentence is preceded by two sentences: “Despite, or because of, that admission Spinoza rejected Maimonides’ allegorical interpretation of the Bible as ‘harmful, useless and absurd’. Thus, he cannot be considered a genuine spokesman of the tradition.” Both sentences and the footnote to the Spinoza quotation (“*Tractatus theologico-politicus*, cap. 7, § 87 (Bruder).”) were not transcribed by the typist. In M, LS made two little marks in black ink, one before and one after the last two sentences.

^{xxxvii} He writes in the 71st *Literaturbrief* (*Werke*, IV 197), after having quoted a statement of Leibniz in praise of criticism and study of the classics: “Gewiß, die Kritik auf dieser Seite betrachtet, und das Studium der Alten bis zu dieser Bekanntschaft (with Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes and Apollonius) getrieben, ist keine Pedanterie, sondern vielmehr das Mittel, wodurch Leibniz der geworden ist, der er war, und *der einzige Weg*, durch welchen sich ein fleißiger und denkender Mann ihm nähern kann.” (The italics are mine.) Ten years later (1769) he says in the *Briefe antiquarischen Inhalts* XLV (*Werke*, XVII 218): “Wir sehen mehr als die Alten, und doch dürften vielleicht unsere Augen schlechter sein als die Augen der Alten; die Alten sahen weniger als wir, aber ihre Augen ...möchten leicht schärfer gewesen sein als unsere.—Ich fürchte, daß die ganze Vergleichung der Alten und Neuern hierauf hinauslaufen dürfte.” [“Certainly, the criticism considered from this side, and the study of the ancients pushed to this familiarity (with Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes and Apollonius) is not pedantry, but in fact the means whereby Leibniz became who he was and the *only way* through which a diligent and thinking man can approach him.” “We see more than the ancients, and yet perhaps our eyes might be worse than the eyes of the ancients; the ancients saw less [or, fewer things] than we, but their eyes ...may easily have been sharper than ours.—I am afraid, that the entire comparison of ancients and moderns might come down to this.”—Cf. “Notes on Philosophy and Revelation,” in Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, translated by M. Brainard (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178f.]

¹¹⁸ M: classical → ancient

APPENDIX F

SUPPLEMENT 1: EARLY PLAN OF “EXOTERIC TEACHING”

A

- 1) To-day the distinction between exoteric and esoteric teaching is wholly opposed—this opposition is due to the fact that modern philosophy has destroyed the possibility of understanding—and that class. scholarship has made a tremendous progress.¹
- 2) At the end of the 18th century, that distinction was still understood: Lessing.
- 3) Schleiermacher’s criticism: he does not see any more the moral problem involved. [Schleiermacher] to whom we are indebted for the deepest insights into the element of Plato’s writings
- 3a) Lessing—Leibniz—Hobbes² (vera—pia dogmata)—Spinoza—RMbM³—
- 4) Post-Ciceronian authors.
- 5) Cicero—but he himself is an exoteric writer.⁴
- 6) Plato— a) Letters Ep. II, 314a–c.⁵ Ep. VII, 341a–e, 344d.⁶
b) Phaedrus, Rep (drama and writings); Timaeus
- 7) Xenophon Cynegeticus.⁷

¹ Cf. the following statements in *PAW*: “We are prevented from considering this possibility [i.e., the possibility of communication of crucial issues between the lines], and still more from considering the questions connected with it, by some habits produced by, or related to, a comparatively recent progress in historical research” (*PAW* 26). “Modern historical research [...] has counteracted or even destroyed an earlier tendency to read between the lines of the great writers” (*PAW* 31f.).

² LS first wrote “Spinoza—Hobbes” but crossed out “Spinoza.”

³ That is, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, the traditional acronym for Maimonides.

⁴ Cf. *PAW* 34n16 and 185n85. See “Der Ort der Vorsehungslehre nach der Ansicht Maimunis,” in *GS*–2 188n29; *PoP* 547n29.

⁵ Cf. *OPS* 29.

⁶ Cf. *PAW* 35n17 and 187n90.

⁷ Cf. *PAW* 29n11: “[C]ertain contemporaries of the ‘rhetor’ Xenophon believed that ‘what is beautifully and methodically written, is not beautifully and methodically written’ (*Cynegeticus*, 13.6).” See also LS to Jacob Klein, August 7, 1939, in: *GS*–3 576 and *SSTX* 502.

- 8) Plato's remarks on Homer and especially on Hesiod.⁸
- 9) Hesiod on Muses....⁹
- 10) Herakleitus
- 11) The big exceptions: Epicurus and Sophists.¹⁰
 - cf. Cic. *Rep.* III 16, 26,¹¹ N.D. I 41.¹²
 - cf. Usener.¹³
 - a) Epicurus
 - b) Sophists.

⁸Cf. LS to Jacob Klein, October 10, 1939, in GS-3 582: "To cut the matter short, what Plato says in the *Theaetetus* on the poets of the past, namely that they had disguised philosophy as poetry, can really be demonstrated in the case of Hesiod (who occurs in the *Republic* somewhere in the middle of an enumeration). I am convinced that it is not different in the case of Homer. One day read the *Shield of Achilles*! And the self-identification with Odysseus in the *Odyssey* and the strange fact that Thersites says the truth."

⁹Cf. LS to Jacob Klein, October 10, 1939, in GS-3 581f., esp. 582: "The key to the book are—the Muses, who are explicitly referred to as the main issue. The Muses have a twofold genealogy: 1) exoterically they descend from Zeus and Mnemosyne; 2) esoterically they are offspring of Ocean. You will immediately guess how this is connected on the basis of the beginning of the *Odyssey* as well as the remarks in the *Theaetetus* and in the *Metaphysics* on the origin of Thales' dictum." Cf. LAM 36f.

¹⁰Cf., however, PAW 36.

¹¹See LAM 90 with 136n21. Cf. Cicero, *Republic* 3.16.26: "Ad haec illa dici solent primum ab iis, qui minime sunt in disserendo mali, qui in ea causa eo plus auctoritatis habent, quia, cum de viro bono queritur, quem apertum et simplicem volumus esse, non sunt in disputando vafri, non veteratores, non malitiosi; negant enim sapientem idcirco virum bonum esse, quod eum sua sponte ac per se bonitas et iustitia delectet, sed quod vacua metu, cura, sollicitudine, periculo vita bonorum virorum sit, contra autem improbis semper aliqui scrupus in animis haereat, semper iis ante oculos iudicia et supplicia versentur; nullum autem emolumentum esse, nullum iniustitia partum praemium tantum, semper ut timeas, semper ut adesse, semper ut impendere aliquam poenam putes, damna...." (My italics, H.K.). ("To such arguments as these the following are usually the replies first given by those who are not unskilful in disputation, and whose discussions of this subject have all the greater weight because, in the search for the good man, whom we require to be open and frank, they do not themselves use crafty and rascally tricks of argument—these men say first of all that a wise man is not good because goodness and justice of or in themselves give him pleasure, but because the life of a good man is free from fear, anxiety, worry, and danger, while on the other hand the minds of the wicked are always troubled by one thing or another, and trial and punishment always stand before their eyes. They add, on the other hand, that no advantage or reward won by injustice is great enough to offset constant fear, or the ever-present thought that some punishment is near, or is threatening,.... losses...." Cicero, *De Re Publica. De Legibus*, translated by Clinton Walker Keyes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 205–07.)

¹²Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 1.41.115: "'At etiam de sanctitate, de pietate adversus deos libros scripsit Epicurus.' At quo modo in his loquitur? Ut T. Coruncanium aut P. Scaevolam pontifices maximos te audire dicas, non eum qui sustulerit omnem funditus religionem nec manibus ut Xerxes sed rationibus deorum immortalium templa et aras everterit". ("Yes, but Epicurus actually wrote books about holiness and piety. But what is the language of these books? Such that you think you are listening to a Coruncanium or a Scaevola, high priests, not to the man who destroyed the very foundations of religion, and overthrew—not by main force like Xerxes, but by argument—the temples and the altars of the immortal gods." Cicero, *De Natura Deorum. Academica*, translated by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 111.) Cf. also 1.44.122f.: "'At etiam liber est Epicuri de sanctitate.' Ludimur ab homine non tam faceto quam ad scribendi licentiam libero." ("Why, but Epicurus (you tell me) actually wrote a treatise on holiness. Epicurus is making fun of us, though he is not so much a humorist as a loose and careless writer." Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 119.)

¹³Hermann Usener published a collection of fragments called *Epicurea* in 1887. For the Cicero quotations from the previous footnote, cf. *Epicurea* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1966), 100.

B. Explanation: Gellius XX 5:¹⁴ res civiles—subtiliores

↓
(natura)

Exoteric philosophy is a Weltanschauung σώζων political and moral life: makes man the center of the universe.¹⁵

Esoteric philosophy sees man in his insignificance.¹⁶

Disproportion of things political and things speculative—cf. Ar. on laws and τέχνηαι.¹⁷

Quieta movere and Quieta non movere¹⁸

Philosophy as essentially unrevolutionary and as interested only in truth.

Lessing had not to wait for the French Revolution in order to separate himself from the philosophy of Enlightenment.

Lie in the soul—lie in speech.¹⁹

¹⁴ See Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, 20.5: “Commentationum suarum artiumque quas discipulis tradebat Aristoteles philosophus, regis Alexandri magister, duas species habuisse dicitur. Alia erant, quae nominabat ἐξωτερικά, alia, quae appellabat ἀκροατικά. Ἐξωτερικά dicebantur, quae ad rhetoricas meditationes facultatemque argutiarum *civilumque rerum* notitiam conducebant, ἀκροατικά autem vocabantur, in quibus philosophia remotior *subtiliorque* agitabatur quaeque ad *naturae* contemplationes disceptationesve dialecticas pertinebant” (My italics, H.K.). (“The philosopher Aristotle, the teacher of king Alexander, is said to have had two forms of the lectures and instructions which he delivered to his pupils. One of these was the kind called ἐξωτερικά, or ‘exoteric,’ the other ἀκροατικά, or ‘acroatic.’ Those were called ‘exoteric’ which he gave training in rhetorical exercises, logical subtlety, and acquaintance with politics; those were called ‘acroatic’ in which more profound and recondite philosophy was discussed, which related to the contemplation of nature or dialectic discussions.” Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, translated by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 3, 431–33.)

¹⁵ Cf. *LAM* 93; *NRH* 155 and 248.

¹⁶ Cf. *GS-1* 244f.; *SCR* 190.

¹⁷ Cf. *CM* 21f.: “[Aristotle] is much less sure than Hippodamus of the virtues of innovation. It seems that Hippodamus had not given thought to the difference between innovation in the arts and innovation in law, or to the possible tension between the need for political stability and what one might call technological change.”

¹⁸ LS is alluding to the legal maxim “stare decisis, et non quieta movere” (“to stand by decisions and not to move quietude”) that calls for the adherence to precedents and warns against changes. In Germany, “quieta non movere” became well known after Bismarck mentioned the proverb in a speech in 1891: “There is an old, good political proverb: *Quieta non movere*, that means, do not disturb what rests quietly; and this is truly conservative: not to support a legislation which upsets something for which no need for change exists.” Cf. Otto von Bismarck, *Werke in Auswahl*, edited by Rudolf Buchner and Georg Engel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), vol. 8 (B), 73.

¹⁹ Cf. Plato, *Republic* 382a–e and 535d–e. See *PAW* 35 and *WTPP* 136.

APPENDIX F

SUPPLEMENT 2: LATER PLAN OF “EXOTERIC TEACHING”

Plan.

I

1. Philosophy and class. scholarship; Zeller.
2. Husserl: Philos. als strenge Wiss. und Philos. als Weltanschauung.¹
3. Lessing'[s] explanation of exotericism.
4. Schleiermacher'[s] criticism of exotericism. Hegel's criticism of exotericism.²
5. The basis of Lessing's rediscovery of exotericism: the political problem.

¹The second point of the list was inserted in the margin. The numbers of the first part of the plan were changed accordingly.—Edmund Husserl's "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft" was first published in *Logos* 1, no. 3 (1911): 289–341. In his late essay "Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy," LS writes: "Let us see whether a place for political philosophy is left in Husserl's philosophy. What I am going to say is based on a re-reading, after many years of neglect, of Husserl's programmatic essay 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science.' The essay was first published in 1911, and Husserl's thought underwent many important changes afterward. Yet it is his most important utterance on the question with which we are concerned" (SPPP 34). In the same essay, LS also deals with Husserl's view of "Weltanschauung" (SPPP 36f.).

²The second part of this point was inserted in the margin.—Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*, in *Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. 19, 21f.: "Eine andere Schwierigkeit soll die sein: man unterscheidet exoterische und esoterische Philosophie. Tennemann sagt ([*Geschichte der Philosophie*,] Bd. II, S. 220): 'Platon bediente sich desselben Rechts, welches jedem Denker zusteht, von seinen Entdeckungen nur so viel, als er für gut fand, und nur denen mitzuteilen, welchen er Empfänglichkeit zutraute. Auch Aristoteles hatte eine esoterische und exoterische Philosophie, nur mit dem Unterschiede, daß bei diesem der Unterschied bloß *formal*, beim Plato hingegen auch zugleich *material* war.' Wie einfältig! Das sieht aus, als sei der Philosoph im Besitz seiner Gedanken wie der äußerlichen Dinge. Die Gedanken sind aber ganz etwas anderes. Die philosophische Idee besitzt umgekehrt den Menschen. Wenn Philosophen sich über philosophische Gegenstände explizieren, so müssen sie sich nach ihren Ideen richten; sie können sie nicht in der Tasche behalten. Spricht man auch mit einigen äußerlich, so ist die Idee immer darin enthalten, wenn die Sache nur Inhalt hat. Zur Mitteilung, Übergabe einer äußerlichen Sache gehört nicht viel, aber zur Mitteilung der Idee gehört Geschicklichkeit. Sie bleibt immer etwas Esoterisches; man hat also nicht bloß das Exoterische der Philosophen. Das sind oberflächliche Vorstellungen." ("Another difficulty is said to be the following: a distinction is made between exoteric and esoteric

6. Lessing—Leibniz—Spinoza (—RMbM)
7. Lessing'[s] intransigent classicism.

II³

7. Aristotle's "exoteric" writings.⁴
8. Cicero.
9. Xenoph. Cyneg.
10. Plato's Letters
11. Plato's dialogues. Phaedrus Rep Timaeus.
12. Plato on the poets
and Hesiod on Muses.
13. Herakleitus
14. The big exceptions: Epicurus and Sophists. Cic. Rep. III

The questions: Why do they hide? and How can we decipher their truths will be discussed in⁵ the continuation of this article. The historian cannot do more than to show that the ancient philosophers did hide their thoughts, that their works are—mixtures of truth and lies. The question of why they did it, must be answered by a philosopher.

philosophy. Tennemann ([*Geschichte der Philosophie*,] vol. II, 220) says: 'Plato exercised the same right that every thinker has to communicate only so much of his discoveries as he thought good, and only to those whom he credited with capacity to receive it. Aristotle, too, had an esoteric and an exoteric philosophy, but with the difference, that in his case the distinction was merely *formal*, while in the case of Plato it was at the same time *material*.' How simpleminded! This looks as if the philosopher is in possession of his thoughts in the same way as of external things. But the thoughts are something utterly different. Instead of the reverse, the philosophic idea is in possession of the human being. When philosophers elaborate on philosophic subjects, they have to follow [the course of] their ideas; they cannot keep them in their pocket. Even when speaking externally [*äußerlich*] to some people, the idea must be contained [in this speech], if the matter [*Sache*] has any content at all. It does not take much to hand over an external item, but the communication of ideas requires skill. The idea always remains something esoteric; hence, one does not merely have the exoteric [*das Exoterische*] of the philosophers. These notions are superficial.")

³The second part of this plan has been published previously by Heinrich Meier in the introduction to *Die Denkbewegung von Leo Strauss. Die Geschichte der Philosophie und die Intention des Philosophen* (Stuttgart/Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1996), 15n4.

⁴Cf. PAW 28: "After the great theologian Schleiermacher asserted, with an unusually able argument, the view that there is only one Platonic teaching, the question of the esotericism of the ancient philosophers was narrowed down, for all practical purposes, to *the meaning of Aristotle's 'exoteric speeches'*; and in this regard one of the greatest humanists of the present day asserts that the attribution of a secret teaching to Aristotle is 'obviously a late invention originating in the spirit of Neo-Pythagoreanism.'" (My italics, H.K.) Aristotle refers at least eight times in his works to *exōterikoi logoi* (cf., for example, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102a26 and 1140a3, *Politics*, 1278b31 and 1323a22 as well as *Metaphysics*, 1076a28).

⁵LS first wrote "in a separate" but crossed it out.

APPENDIX G

LEO STRAUSS: LECTURE NOTES FOR “PERSECUTION AND THE ART OF WRITING” (1939)

Edited by Hannes Kerber

[1 recto] *Persecution and the Art of Writing*.

The purpose of this lecture¹ is to draw your attention to a certain approach to earlier literature—to an approach which, to my mind, has not been sufficiently considered. I do not say that the approach which I am going to suggest, is necessarily correct, but I believe that it is worth considering. As my starting-point, I shall choose certain phenomena which are accessible to everyone’s observation, at least to-day, if not at all times.

Before I start, I want to point out one example of the questions which ²originally² led me to consider the approach in question. You all know the *Don Quixote*³—you know the story and the characters—you remember how Cervantes interrupts his account of Don Quixote’s fight with the Biscayan⁴ because, he says, he does not know the continuation—how Cervantes, as he recounts, was looking around everywhere for the continuation until he discovered by chance an Arabic MS. on the exchange in Toledo, how he got it translated into Castilian⁵—thus, the larger part of that immortal work claims to be translated from the Arabic, it claims to be written, not by Cervantes, but by Sid Hamed, a Muslim.⁶—Why does Cervantes

¹ Cf. p. 273n10..

² Inserted by LS in pencil between the lines or in the margin.

³ According to German custom, LS prefaces the title of *Don Quixote* with the definite article, in order to distinguish for the listeners his mentioning the book from his mentioning the hero.

⁴ That is, the Biscayan.

⁵ Cf. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, chapter IX. Cf., for example, NRH 62; CM 158; OPS 169–70. See also “The Origins of Political Science and the Problem of Socrates,” in *Interpretation* 23, no. 2 (1996): 152.

⁶ Cf. LS to Jacob Klein, August 18, 1939, in GS–3 580f.: “Since we are talking about exotericism—epaggelomai [I announce] that I have understood *Don Quixote*. The key is this: the book is the work of two authors, of Cervantes and of Sid Hamed, *i.e.*, a Christian and a Muslim. Now take away the artificial

tell this obvious lie? Is this just a joke for joke's sake? Everyone admits that the *Don Quixote* is a *deep* book, Don Quixote is not just a fool, he *represents* something, certainly a folly, but a *great* folly, an *eternal* folly. What is then the reason that he makes such a strange joke concerning the authorship of the book, that he attributes the authorship to Sid Hamed? What is the *relation* of that strange joke to the eternal folly represented by Don Quixote?

Cervantes satirizes the books of chivalry. This is his professed intention. Accordingly the books of chivalry which drove Don Quixote mad, are burned by the priest and barber of Don Quixote's hometown, i.e. by the authority spiritual and temporal.⁷ But, before they are burned, priest and barber discuss the merits and demerits of those books, and they find that they are *innocent*, and that quite a few of them are even good literature. Why does then Cervantes satirize the whole *genre*? Because of the idiotic imitations which abounded one or two generations before Cervantes wrote the *Don Quixote*? Are we to believe that a man of Cervantes' rank shall waste his time with satirizing an ephemeral fashion? No—for all good books are, and are *meant* to be, possessions for all times.⁸

We might be inclined to say: well, difficulties or inconsistencies of that kind occur in practically all great books—aliquando dormitat bonus Homerus⁹—May be. But may it not also be that we are somewhat *naïve* as regards those books and their authors? That we underestimate the clarity of thought, the power of expression, the imagination, and, above all, the willingness and love for *work* (φιλοπονία)¹⁰ of these men? If they were inconsistent and sometimes¹¹ insipid—may they not have *wished* to be inconsistent and insipid? may they not have *wished* to give us some riddles to solve? may it not be that the deficiencies of their works—all those

split of the one author, then you see that the author is Christian as well as Muslim, i.e., neither of the two. The author is therefore a philosopher, and Don Quixote represents the founder of a religion and Sancho Panza the believer. In fact, Don Quixote is the synthesis of Christianity (sorrowful countenance) and Islam (holy war); he is superior to his predecessors in that he is furthermore educated and polite. Dulcinea is Mary. The allusions to the Reformation, for example, are abundant. Consider also the role of books in *Don Quixote*: Christianity and Islam are based on books. The deeds of Don Quixote are miracles. Read the book on occasion again, and you will see that this is the case."

⁷ Cf. APT in GS-2 222: "Of Christian origin is, above all, Abravanel's general conception of the government of the Jewish nation. According to him, that government consists of two kinds of governments, of a government human and of a government spiritual or divine. This distinction is simply the Christian distinction between the authority spiritual and the authority temporal." Cf. GS-2 225. See also NRH 253-54.

⁸ For the source of the expression, see Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.22.4 ("And, indeed, [the *History*] has been composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time." Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Charles Forster Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), vol. 1, 41. Cf., for example, PAW 160; CM 142-43, 157, 159, 228.

⁹ "Sometimes [even] good Homer nods."—For the source of this proverbial expression, see Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, 358-60 ("...et idem / indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus, / verum operi longo fas est obrepere somnum."). Cf. PAW 26.

¹⁰ Cf., for example, Plato, *Republic*, 535d and *Alcibiades I*, 122c; Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, 21.6. Cf. XSD 79 with 200.

¹¹ LS first wrote "somewhat" but later replaced it by "sometimes."

deficiencies exploited by 19th century higher criticism¹²—are *intentional* and *deliberate*?² At this point, we are helped somewhat by an experience we are unfortunate enough to make to-day.²

[1 verso]

<1. Persecution → writing between the lines.

2. Persecution in the past → writing between the lines in the past.

II 3. Of the danger of reading between the lines: what is the difference between legitimate reading between the lines and arbitrary guess work?¹³

Only if reading between the lines: more *exact* and more *exacting* than ordinary reading, can it claim any consideration.¹⁴

Reading between the lines as regards the books in question, is *necessarily* more exact than our ordinary reading: for a teaching transmitted between the lines, is addressed to *very careful* readers only.

Only the greatest care in reading can discover that teaching.¹⁵

But which are the cases in which we are entitled or rather compelled to read between the lines?

In all cases in which ordinary reading is not sufficient to lead to an adequate understanding. E.g. if we find insipid passages which a high school [boy] would be ashamed of having written, in books of first class writers.¹⁶

III 4. Two types of persecution-literature.¹⁷

Generalization of “persecution” > social ostracism.¹⁸

How far do earlier writers, as a *matter of principle*, conceal their most significant opinions?

Common to both types: conceal with regard to social conformity, which is either merely enforced (modern type) or even desired?>

[3 recto]¹⁹ <is opposed to the orthodox view in its entirety, although he pays lip-service to it on every page and in every sentence. If we read that author again, but more vigilantly, and less innocently, we can be certain that we find many more traces of his independence than the ones which struck us first.

¹² Cf. PAW 30–31.

¹³ Cf. PAW 27, 30, 32; WIPP 224, 231; OT 27; ONI 351–52.

¹⁴ Cf. PAW 30.

¹⁵ Cf. PAW 144.

¹⁶ Cf. PAW 30; TM 36; WIPP 223. The passage about the high-school boy may be an allusion to a statement made by G. W. F. Hegel in the introduction (§3) of the *Philosophy of Right*. (See *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. 7, 39–40.)

¹⁷ Cf. PAW 33–34.

¹⁸ Cf. PAW 32–33, WIPP 170.

¹⁹ Unfortunately, the second page of the manuscript seems to have been lost.

In some cases, we are fortunate enough to possess *explicit* evidence¹⁷ either by the authors or by intelligent philosophers²⁰ proving that the author hides his real views, and indicates them only between the lines.[>]²¹

Lessing to MM: “You are more fortunate than other honest people who can *destroy* the most loathsome structure of non-sense (sc. the orthodoxy in question) only by pretending that they want to give it a new foundation.”²²

Hobbes: points out at several occasions that he uttered certain “novel” views during the Commonwealth only, i.e. at a time when the Elizabethan laws against heresy were no longer valid.

and to Aubrey on Spinoza’s *Tr. theol-pol.*: he had not *dared* to write so *boldly*.²³

We have to base our interpretation of Hobbes preferably on the works published under the Commonwealth, and, in case we find two sets of statements, one nearer to orthodoxy and another, contradictory, more remote from orthodoxy—we have to consider the latter to be his true opinions.²⁴

<“*Of Liberty and Necessity*” (London 1654, p. 35f.): “I must confess, if we consider the greatest part of Mankind, not as they should be, but as they are,...I must, I say, confess that the dispute of this question will rather hurt than help their piety; and therefore if his Lordship had not desired this answer, I should not have written it, nor do I write it but in hopes your Lordship and his, will keep it private.”[>]²⁵

4. Of the whole literature which teaches the truth concerning the crucial questions exclusively between the lines, there are two types.²⁶ The difference of these two types corresponds to the difference of attitudes men may have towards persecution.

a) The view most familiar to us, is that persecution is *accidental*, that it is an outcome of a bad construction of the body politic; according to that view, persecution *ought* to be replaced, and *can* be replaced, by freedom of speech; nay, persecution *will* be replaced by freedom of speech.

That view presupposes that the truth about the most important things can be made accessible to the general public, i.e. that popular science is possible (Hobbes: *Paulatim eruditur vulgus*).²⁷ Belief in *progress*. A man who holds this view of persecution, writes and publishes his books in order to *fight* persecution, in order to

²⁰ Inserted by LS between the lines. He first put “authors or by intelligent and benevolent contemporaries” but then crossed “and benevolent contemporaries” out and wrote “philosophers.”

²¹ Cf. PAW 32.

²² Lessing to Moses Mendelssohn, January 9, 1771, in *Werke*, edited by Helmuth Kiesel with Georg Braungart, Klaus Fischer and Ute Wahl (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988), vol. 11.2, 146.

²³ See *Die Religionskritik des Hobbes* in GS–3 277n20, HCR 32n20, WIPP 274. Cf. WIPP 171 and PAW 183.

²⁴ Cf. PAW 185–86.

²⁵ See *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1840), vol. IV, 256–57. Cf. PAW 34n15.

²⁶ Cf. PAW 33–34.

²⁷ “Gradually the vulgar become educated.” See Hobbes, *De Homine*, 14.13, in *Opera latina*, edited by William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1839), vol. II, 128. Cf. PAW 34n15; NRH 200; ONI 360; *Die Religionskritik des Hobbes*, in GS–3 348n243; HCR 94n243.

contribute to the establishment of freedom of speech. And he *hides* his view *merely* for fear of persecution, for fear of violent death or prison or exile.²⁸

b) According to another view, persecution is *essential*, or necessary, and *will* not be superseded, and *ought* not to be superseded. What *we* call persecution, the adherent of that view would call: uniformity of thought as regards the fundamentals, among the citizens; such a uniformity, he holds, is a prerequisite of any ²healthy² political life. And such a uniformity²⁹ ought not to be endangered by public utterance of divergent views, [3 verso] <however true>. <He holds that the requirements of political and social life are different from, and in a sense opposed to, the requirements of philosophy or science:

the principle of political or social life is: *quieta non movere*³⁰

the principle of philosophy and science, of theoretical life is: *quieta movere*
Arts and sciences *ought* to progress—but laws and customs ought to remain as stable as possible.³¹ This view combines then intellectual radicalism with political and social conservatism. An author of that kind hides his heterodox views not merely for fear, but as a matter of duty towards the Commonwealth. Therefore, his technique of hiding is much more elaborate than that of an author who is interested in political or social change. Therefore, his real views are much more difficult³² to decipher, and, thus, his books are much more intriguing and interesting.³³

²Generalization of our topic: *society and individual, thinking individual*—society and thought—How far do earlier authors, *as a matter of principle*, conceal their opinions? How far is earlier technique of writing *different* from present-day technique?²

Generally speaking, a) is modern, and b) is ancient and medieval. Yet, we find quite a few examples of the second type up to the 18th century.

I wish to speak mainly of the second type. For it is by far the more interesting and important. Not merely historically, but also for us: that type produced the very highest kind of literature in existence—a kind of literature which *has* provided men, and *will* provide men as long as they read at all, with the best and most solid kind of *education*.³⁴ By being silent to all but extremely careful and vigilant readers, they compel us to be as careful and as vigilant, as flexible and as resourceful as we possibly can. And thus, they educate us.>

If people hide their opinions, they will not *say* that they hide them, or at least they will not say it too loud—or else they would defeat their own purpose. Therefore, explicit evidence in support of the view that an author hides his opinions, is relatively rare. There is however a number of statements to this effect in existence.³⁵

²⁸ Cf. SSTX 535: "It would, however, betray too low a view of the philosophic writers of the past if one assumed that they concealed their thoughts merely for fear of persecution or of violent death."

²⁹ LS first wrote "prerequisite" but later replaced it by "uniformity."

³⁰ Cf. above, p. 289n18.

³¹ Cf., for example, CM 21–22.

³² LS first wrote "hidden" but later replaced it by "difficult."

³³ Cf. PAW 34.

³⁴ Cf. PAW 37.

³⁵ Cf. PAW 32.

I have mentioned *Lessing* already. Lessing has written two treatises on the theology and philosophy of *Leibniz*,³⁶ which show that Leibniz had two kinds of teaching, a public and a private teaching. Lessing's interpretation of that procedure surpasses in depth everything I know of, written in the modern period. Another writing of Lessing's, *Dialogues on freemasonry*,³⁷ sets it beyond doubt that the method of Leibniz he analyzed in the 2 treatises mentioned, was used by himself as well: it was his settled principle not to state in his publications explicitly, what he really thought of the then crucial question. A few years after his death, a private conversation of his was published,³⁸ which gave people an idea, if a superficial one, that the ordinary reader of Lessing's writings, i.e. he who did not read between the lines, did not know Lessing's view concerning the most important questions at all.³⁹

Montesquieu is another author of that kind. In a recent discussion of his *Spirit of [the] Laws*, complaint is made of the total lack of order of that work, and of the surprising amount of irrelevance to be met with in it.⁴⁰ An extremely intelligent contemporary of Montesquieu, d'Alembert, gives us some information about the apparent deficiencies of Montesquieu's work. "We say of the *obscurity* which one may permit oneself in a book of that kind, the same what we said of the *lack of order*. What would be obscure for ordinary readers, is not obscure for those whom that author had in mind. Besides, *voluntary* obscurity is not really obscurity. M. de Montesquieu had to present sometimes important truths, the absolute and direct statement of which might have offended without bringing any benefits; therefore he had the *prudence* to envelop them; and by this *innocent artifice*, he hid them from them [4 recto] to whom they would be harmful,⁴¹ without making them inaccessible to the wise."⁴² Another friend of M. speaks of the "wonderful, *if hidden* order" of the *Spirit of [the] Laws*.⁴³ That is to say: the first task of the interpreter has to be: to find out the reasons why M. discusses, say, this topic in this ²strange² place.

³⁶LS is alluding to "Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen" and "Des Andreas Wissowatius Einwurfe wider die Dreieinigkeit," in Lessing, *Werke*, vol. 7, 472–501 and 548–81. Cf. PAW 182.

³⁷LS is referring to *Ernst und Falk*. Cf. Lessing, *Werke*, vol. 10, 11–66. An English translation by C. Maschler can be found in *Interpretation* 14, no. 1 (1986): 14–48.

³⁸In 1785, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi published *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (*On Spinoza's Teaching, in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn*). In this book, he reports a conversation with Lessing in July 1780. LS gives a detailed account of the controversy between Jacobi and Mendelssohn that followed the publication of the book (the "Spinozismustreit") in his introduction to Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden* and *An die Freunde Lessings*. The introduction, written in 1937, was first published in Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*, vol. 3.2, edited by Leo Strauss (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1974), xi–xcv; reprinted in GS–2 528–605; English translation in LSMM 59–145.

³⁹In the margin, LS wrote "Rousseau p.m. 126, n. 2 and cf. 2nd Discours p. 40–41 with *Contrat social* IV 8." The abbreviation "p.m." is short for "penes me" (in my possession).

⁴⁰LS is probably referring to George H. Sabine's *A History of Political Theory*. Cf. PAW 28–29.

⁴¹LS first wrote "dangerous" but later replaced it with "harmful."

⁴²This passage from Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert's *Éloge de Montesquieu* is quoted in PAW 29n11.

⁴³Cf. PAW 29n11 with Stefano Bertolini, *Analyse raisonnée de l'Esprit des Lois*: "Voilà l'économie de cet ouvrage magnifique. A la peinture que je viens de tracer, quelque foible qu'elle soit, il est aisé de voir que dans ce livre de l'*Esprit des Lois* règnent la précision, la justesse, un ordre merveilleux; ordre peut-être caché aux yeux de ceux qui ne sauroient marcher que de conséquence en conséquence, toujours

Spinoza: one of the rules of life he set up for himself: *ad captum vulgi loqui* (to adapt his language to the language of the vulgar).⁴⁴ Tradition has it that the inscription of his signet is: “Caute.”⁴⁵ It would be a mistake to think that Spinoza’s *Ethics* is *not* written in the language of the vulgar. “Evasive”.

Descartes makes this entry in his diary: “Up to now, I have been a spectator of this theatre of the world; but now being about to ascend the stage of that theatre, I put on a mask, just as the comedians do who do not wish that their feeling of shame would⁴⁶ become visible.” (“*Ut comoedi, moniti ne in fronte appareat pudor, personam induunt, sic ego, hoc mundi theatrum consensurus, in quo hactenus spectator exstiti, larvatus prode.*” *Oeuvres* X 213).⁴⁷

Accordingly, he demands that *some months* shall be devoted to the perusal of the 1st Meditation (VII 130).⁴⁸ *Writing* is an *action*, and as such subject to the political and ecclesiastical authorities; but *thought* recognizes no authority but *reason* (Discours VI in princ.).⁴⁹ The *real* views of Desc. are not to be found *in* his writings but *between the lines* of his writings.

guidés par des définitions, des divisions, des avant-propos, des distinctions, mais qui paroît dans tout son jour aux esprits attentifs, capables de suppléer d’eux-mêmes les conséquences qui naissent des principes, et assez habiles pour rapprocher et joindre dans la chaîne des vérités établies celles qui s’ensuivent, qui, aux yeux des connoisseurs, ne sont, pour ainsi dire, couvertes que d’un voile transparent.” (“Here is the layout of this magnificent work. In the picture I have just sketched, however inadequate it may be, it is easy to see the precision, accuracy, and wonderful order that reign in this book, *The Spirit of Laws*. It is an order hidden perhaps from the eyes of those who can only proceed from consequence to consequence, always guided by definitions, divisions, forewords, and distinctions, but which appears fully illuminated to attentive minds, who are capable by themselves of supplying those consequences born of principles, and who are skillful enough to bring forth and connect to the chain of established truths those truths that follow therefrom, which in the eyes of experts, are, so to speak, covered only by a transparent veil.”) The *Analyse* was reprinted in the *Œuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, edited by Édouard Laboulaye (Paris: Granier, 1876), vol. III, here 60.

⁴⁴ In his *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* (sect. 17), Spinoza declares as one of his *regulae vivendi*: “Ad captum vulgi loqui, et illa omnia operari, quae nihil impedimenti adferunt, quominus nostrum scopum attingamus.” (*Opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), vol. II, 9.) In the article “How to Study Spinoza’s *Theologico-Political Treatise*,” LS translates the sentence in the following way: “To speak with a view to the capacity of the vulgar and to practice all those things which cannot hinder us from reaching our goal (*sc.* the highest good).” (*PAW* 177, cf. 177–97.)

⁴⁵ Cf. *PAW* 180.

⁴⁶ LS first wrote “might” but later replaced it with “would.”

⁴⁷ LS quotes the first few lines of the *Cognitiones privatae* in the edition by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1897–1913).

⁴⁸ LS is referring to the *Responsio ad secundas objectiones* in the same edition.

⁴⁹ Cf. Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, edited by Étienne Gilson. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1939), 60 (beginning of part 6): “Or, il y a maintenant trois ans que j’étais parvenu à la fin du traité qui contient toutes ces choses, et que je commençais à le revoir, afin de le mettre entre les mains d’un imprimeur, lorsque j’appris que des personnes, à qui je défère et dont l’autorité ne peut guère moins sur mes actions que ma propre raison sur mes pensées, avaient désapprouvé une opinion de physique, publiée un peu auparavant par quelque autre, de laquelle je ne veux pas dire que je fusse, mais bien que je n’y avais rien remarqué, avant leur censure, que je pusse imaginer être préjudiciable ni à la religion ni à l’État, ni, par conséquent, qui m’eût empêché de l’écrire, si la raison me l’eût persuadée, et que cela me fit craindre qu’il ne s’en trouvât tout de même quelque une entre les miennes, en laquelle je me fusse mépris, nonobstant le grand soin que j’ai toujours eu de n’en point recevoir de nouvelles en ma créance, dont je n’eusse des démonstrations très certaines, et de n’en point écrire qui pussent tourner

Bacon. "I sometimes alter the uses and definitions (of the traditional terms), according to the *moderate* proceeding in civil government; where although there be some alteration, yet that holdeth which Tacitus wisely noteth, *Eadem magistratuum vocabula*." (Ann. I 3).⁵⁰ (Advanc. p. 92).⁵¹

Note his interest in *ciphers*.

The *arcana imperii* literature in the 16th century (Lipsius⁵² etc.).

"Government...is a part of knowledge secret and retired, in both these respects in which things are deemed secret; for some things are secret because they are hard to know, and some because they are *not fit to utter*...even unto the general rules and discourses of policy and government is due a reverent and reserved handling." (205f.).⁵³ No wonder that he did not finish his utopia, *New Atlantis*, and that he omitted practically everything *political* from it.

The writers I have mentioned, are not the inventors of such techniques. They make use of a *tradition*, of the traditional distinction between *exoteric* teaching and *esoteric* teaching. An esoteric⁵⁴ teaching is *not*, as some present day scholars seem to think, a *mystical* teaching: it is the *scientific* teaching. Exoteric = popular. Esoteric = scientific and *therefore* secret.

au désavantage de personne." ("It is now three years since I completed the treatise that contains all these things, and began to review it before putting it in the hands of the printer, when I learned that certain persons to whom I defer, and whose authority over my actions can scarcely be less than that of my own reason over my thoughts, had disapproved of certain opinions in physics, published shortly before by someone else. I do not wish to say that I agreed with it, but since I had noticed nothing in it before their censure that I could imagine to be prejudicial either to religion or to the state, or consequently that would have prevented me from writing it if reason had so persuaded me, this made me fear that there might nevertheless be found among my thoughts some one that was mistaken, despite the great care I have always taken not to receive new ones among my beliefs of which I did not have very certain demonstrations, and to write nothing that could turn to the disadvantage of anyone." Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Richard Kennington (Newburyport, MA: Focus Philosophical Library, 2007), 48)—Cf. PAW 182–83.

⁵⁰ Cf. Tacitus, *The Annals*, 1.3: "Domi res tranquillae, eadem magistratuum vocabula; iuniores post Actiacam victoriam, etiam senes plerique inter bella civium nati: quotus quisque reliquus, qui rem publicam vidisset?" (My italics, H.K.) ("At home all was calm. The officials carried the old names; the younger men had been born after the victory of Actium; most even of the elder generation, during the civil wars; few indeed were left who had seen the Republic." Tacitus, *The Histories. The Annals*, translated by Clifford H. Moore/John Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), vol. 2, 249.)

⁵¹ Cf. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, edited by Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 81: "But to me on the other side that do desire as much as lyeth in my Penne, to ground a sociable entercourse between Antiquitie and Proficience, it seemeth best, to keepe way with Antiquitie *vsque ad aras*; And therefore to retaine the ancient tearmes, though I sometimes alter the vses and definitions, according to the Moderate proceeding in Ciuill gouernment; where although there bee some alteration, yet that holdeth which Tacitus wisely noteth, *Eadem Magistratuum vocabula*." Cf. PAW 183.

⁵² For Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), cf. CM 144; Hobbes' *politische Wissenschaft*, in GS–3 100–4.

⁵³ Cf. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 179: "Concerning gouernment, it is a part of knowledge, secret and rettyred in both these respects, in which things are deemed secret: for some things are secret, because they are hard to know, and some because they are not fit to vtter: wee see all gouernments are obscure and inuisible. [...] Neuerthelesse euen vnto the generall rules and discourses of pollicie, and gouernment, there is due a reuerent and reserued handling." Cf. PAW 57n63.

⁵⁴ LS first wrote "exoteric" but later replaced it with "esoteric".

Tradition has it that *Aristotle* wrote two kinds of books: exoteric and esoteric books. But the content of the esoteric books was originally not destined for publication at all: they are still called *acroamatic*, oral.⁵⁵ Scientific teaching was oral teaching, because written teaching cannot remain secret. The truth cannot and ought not to be published—i.e. the truth about the highest things—what *can* be published, are things which *are* public in themselves, ἔνδοξα, moral and political things.

[4 verso]The story of the correspondence between Alexander the Great and Aristotle: Alexander complained to Aristotle that Ar. had published his oral teaching. Ar. answer: those *books are published and not published*; for they are intelligible only to those who have heard my lectures.⁵⁶

This tradition may be spurious. But even spurious traditions are significant.

The attitude presupposed by that tradition, is certainly much older than the Christian period. We find it clearly expressed in the 2nd and 7th of the *Platonic* letters. I believe, they are genuine⁵⁷—but even if not, the “forger” knew more of Plato than we know.

⁵⁵ Cf. Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, 20.5. Cf. above, p. 289n14.

⁵⁶ Cf. Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, 20.5: “Eos libros generis ‘acroatici’ cum in vulgus ab eo editos rex Alexander cognovisset atque ea tempestate armis exercitum omnem prope Asiam teneret regemque ipsum Darium proeliis et victoriis urgeret, in illis tamen tantis negotiis litteras ad Aristotelem misit, non eum recte fecisse, quod disciplinas acroaticas, quibus ab eo ipse eruditus foret, libris foras editis involgasset: ‘Nam quae,’ inquit, ‘alia re praestare ceteris poterimus, si ea quae ex te accepimus omnium prosus fient communia? Quippe ego doctrina anteire malim quam copiis atque opulentis.’ Rescripsit ei Aristoteles ad hanc sententiam: ‘Acroaticos libros, quos editos quereris et non proinde ut arcana absconditos, neque editos scito esse neque non editos, quoniam his solis cognobiles erunt, qui nos audiverunt.’” (“When King Alexander knew that he [sc. Aristotle] had published those books of the ‘acroatic’ set, although at that time the king was keeping almost all of Asia in state of panic by his deeds of arms, and was pressing King Darius himself hard by attacks and victories, yet in the midst of such urgent affairs he sent a letter to Aristotle, saying that the philosopher had not done right in publishing the books and so revealing to the public the acroatic training, in which he himself [sc. Alexander] had been instructed. ‘For in what other way,’ said he, ‘can I excel the rest, if that instruction which I have received from you becomes the common property of all the world? For I would rather be first in learning than in wealth and power.’ Aristotle replied to him to this purport: ‘Know that the acroatic books, which you complain have been made public and not hidden as if they contained secrets, have neither been made public nor hidden, since they can be understood only by those who have heard my lectures.’” Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, translated by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 3, 433–35.) See also Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 7.

⁵⁷ Cf. LS to Jacob Klein, November 28, 1939, in GS–3 586: “By now, I am firmly convinced that *all* Platonic letters (even the first) are genuine: they are the Platonic counterpart [*Gegenstück*] to Xenophon’s *Anabasis*: they are supposed to show that the author has not been corrupted by Socrates: while the author constantly veils himself in the dialogues, it is the purpose of the letters as well as of the *Anabasis* to show that the one who veils himself is absolutely harmless, absolutely *normal*. He unveils himself as normal by writing the first three and the last letter to a tyrant (Dionysius); moreover: the letters which are directed at philosophers deal *exclusively* with πολιτικά, philosophy is discussed only in letters to πολιτικοί, and in such a way that close reading fully destroys the fiction on which the whole matter is based: the seventh letter is precisely in the middle!”

⁵⁸ Cf. OPS 29.

Ep. II (314a–c).⁵⁸ Ep. VII (332d).⁵⁹

- a) the teaching cannot [be] “said” at all.
- b) it can be “said” in writing or in speech, but well or badly.
- c) saying it badly = stating it in *writing fully* to the *public*.

Plato’s *dialogues*. The *Phaedrus* on the danger inherent in all writing. A writing does not know to whom it ought to *talk* and to whom it ought to be *silent* (276a6–7). This is so important *because* the truth is not fit for everybody. Inferiority of all writing to oral instruction. “It is hard to find the father of all things, but to *speak* of him unto *all men* is impossible.” *Timaeus*.⁶⁰

But Plato did write books about the most important topics: on nature, ideas, idea of the good, soul etc. How can we reconcile his refusal to write about such topics with his actual practice? Only by assuming that he did write and did *not* write about them at the same time. Just as Aristotle is said to have said of his esoteric works: they are published and they are *not* published. Books *do* speak and be [recte: are?] silent according to the capacities of the reader. Plato *did* write about the truth: but he did it *enigmatically*.

All Platonic writings are *dialogues*. Dialogues are a kind of *dramas* (dramas in prose and without women and nearer to comedy than to tragedy).⁶¹ What is the characteristic feature of ²the ²drama according to *Plato*? Drama is that kind of poetry in which the author *hides* himself.⁶² By writing *dialogues*, Plato gives us to understand that he hides himself, i.e. his *thought*. *Plato* never said a word on his teaching—only his characters do. But his *main* character, Socrates, does *not*⁶³ speak when the highest topic, the κόσμος, or the being, is discussed: *Timaeus* or the Eleatic stranger.

Plato’s *school*. The Academic philosophers, the successors of Plato, say: In order to discover the truth, one must dispute pro and con as regards everything. The adversary: “I should like to see *what* they have discovered.” The Academic: “We are not used to show[ing] it.” Adversary: “But what in the world are these *mysteries*? or why do you *conceal* your opinion, as if it were something disgraceful?” Academic: “That those who hear, will be swayed by reason, rather than authority.” (*Lucullus* 60).⁶⁴

⁵⁹LS first wrote “314c–e” but later replaced it by “332d”.—On the *Seventh Letter*, cf. ONI 348–51 with LS to Karl Löwith, August 15, 1946, in GS–3 663.

⁶⁰Plato, *Timaeus*, 28c3–5. Cf. PAW 35n17 and FP 375n44.

⁶¹See CM 61: “Socrates left us no example of weeping, but, on the other side, he left us example of laughing. The relation of weeping and laughing is similar to that of tragedy and comedy. We may therefore say that the Socratic conversation and hence the Platonic dialogue is slightly more akin to comedy than to tragedy.” Cf. OPS 279. Contrast LS to Alexandre Kojève, April 22, 1957, in OT 275: “All the Dialogues are tragicomedies. (The tragedian is awake while the comedian is sleeping at the end of the *Symp.*)”

⁶²Plato, *Republic*, 393c. Cf. OT 32.

⁶³LS first wrote “never speaks” but later replaced it by “does *not*.”

⁶⁴Cf. Cicero, *Academica*, 2.59f.: “Mihi porro non tam certum est esse aliquid quod comprehendi possit (de quo iam nimium etiam diu disputo) quam sapientem nihil opinari, id est numquam adsentiri rei vel falsae vel incognitae. Restat illud quod dicunt veri inveniendi causa contra omnia dici oportere et pro omnibus. Volo igitur videre quid invenerint. ‘Non solemus,’ inquit, ‘ostendere.’ ‘Quae sunt tandem ista mysteria, aut cur celatis quasi turpe aliquid sententiam vestram?’ ‘Ut qui audient,’ inquit, ‘ratione potius quam auctoritate ducantur.’” (“For my part, moreover, certain as I am that something exists that can be grasped (the point I have been arguing even too long already), I am still more certain that the wise man

It is *Cicero* who relates this little dialogue. Cicero himself was an academic. Consequently, he says of himself: “we have preferably followed that kind of philosophy (sc. dialogic philosophy) which, as we believed, Socrates has used, (and we did this) in order to hide our own opinion, to free others from error, and to investigate in each discussion what is *most likely to be true*.” (Tusc. V 11).⁶⁵ There is a connection between *hiding* and arriving at a result which is only *likely* to be true, which is only a *likely tale*:⁶⁶ the *true* tale is hidden; it is revealed perhaps in a *dream* (*Somnium Scipionis*).⁶⁷

[5 recto] Hiding one’s thought is irreconcilable with a perfectly clear and lucid *plan*. A lucid plan does not leave room for hiding-places—as a consequence, an exoteric book will not have a very lucid plan.⁶⁸

Cf. Lessing, *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen*: “Ich will mich so kurz fassen wie nur möglich und meine Gedanken wenn nicht ordnen so doch zählen.”⁶⁹

Cf. the twofold discussion of poetry in Rep.⁷⁰—

ib.: the interruption after the enumeration of the bad constitutions—

never holds an opinion, that is, never assents to a thing that is either false or unknown. There remains their statement that for the discovery of the truth it is necessary to argue against all things and for all things. Well then, I should like to see what they have discovered. ‘Oh,’ he says, ‘it is not our practice to give an exposition.’ ‘What pray are these holy secrets of yours, or why does your school conceal its doctrine like something disgraceful?’ ‘In order,’ says he, ‘that our hearers may be guided by reason rather than by authority.’” Cicero, *De Natura Deorum. Academica*, translated by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 543.)

⁶⁵ Cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 5.4.10–11: “Socrates autem primus philosophiam devocavit e caelo et in urbibus collocavit et in domus etiam introduxit et coëgit de vita et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quaerere: cuius multiplex ratio disputandi rerumque varietas et ingenii magnitudo, Platonis memoria et litteris consecrata, plura genera effecit dissentientium philosophorum, e quibus nos id potissimum consecuti sumus, quo Socratem usum arbitrabamur, ut nostram ipsi sententiam tegeremus, errore alios levaremus et in omni disputatione quid esset similimum veri quaereremus.” (My italics, H.K.) (“Socrates on the other hand was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men and bring her also into their homes and compel her to ask questions about life and morality and things good and evil: and his many-sided method of discussion and the varied nature of its subjects and the greatness of his genius, which has been immortalized in Plato’s literary masterpieces, have produced many warring philosophic sects of which I have chosen particularly to follow that one which I think agreeable to the practice of Socrates, in trying to conceal my own private opinion, to relieve others from deception and in every discussion to look for the most probable solution.” Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, translated by J. E. King (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 435). Cf., for example, *NRH* 154–55.

⁶⁶ Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 29d. See, for example, *PAW*, 35 and *SPPP*, 166.

⁶⁷ Cf. Cicero, *De re publica*, 6.9ff.

⁶⁸ Cf. SSTX 523–24.

⁶⁹ Lessing, *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen* (*Werke*, vol. 7, 481): “Ich will, was ich zu sagen habe, so kurz zu fassen suchen, als möglich; und meine Gedanken wo nicht ordnen, doch zählen.” (“I want to try to express what I have to say as briefly as possible; and where I won’t put my thoughts in order, I’ll at least number them.”) Cf. LS to Hans-Georg Gadamer, February 26, 1961, in: “Correspondence concerning *Wahrheit und Methode*,” *The Independent Journal of Philosophy/Unabhängige Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 2 (1978): 6.

⁷⁰ CM 133: “Socrates suddenly returns to the subject of poetry, a subject which had already been discussed at great length when the education of the warriors was being considered. We must try to understand this apparently unmotivated return.” Cf. CM 134–37.

the twofold discussion of education in *Laws*.⁷¹ *Repetition*.⁷²
 the insertion of theology into penal law in the *Laws*⁷³ and into the discussion of
 noble lies in the *Rep*.⁷⁴
 the plan of *Xen. Memor*.⁷⁵

Moreover, hiding one's thought is not reconcilable with absolutely lucid *expressions*: if everything is absolutely clearly expressed, there is no room for hiding places *within* the sentences.

A man who hides his thought will then accept the following maxim: "What is written beautifully and in order, is *not* written beautifully and in order." (*Xen. Cyn[egeiticus]*. 13, 6).⁷⁶ This maxim occurs in a treatise on hunting with dogs, which is a rather good hiding place.

Hiding one's thoughts about the crucial things, when speaking or writing about those things, means making *misstatements* about those things—or: to *lie* about those things.

⁷¹ Cf., for example, *AAPL* 23, 27 and 104–5.

⁷² Cf. *OPS* 237: "General rule: there is never a repetition in Plato which is an identical repetition; there is always a change, though sometimes seemingly trivial." See *PAW* 16 and 62–64.

⁷³ According to LS's interpretation, books 9–12 of the *Laws* are "chiefly devoted to the penal law" (*AAPL* 64, cf. 126). With regard to the Athenian's natural religion in book 10, LS writes: "The Athenian is thus compelled or enabled to discuss what Adeimantos calls theology (*Republic* 379a5–6) within the context of the penal law, whereas Socrates discussed it within the context of pre-philosophic, nay, the most rudimentary education." (*AAPL* 140) Cf., for example, LS to Jacob Klein, February 16, 1939, in *GS*–3 567 as well as "Plato," in *History of Political Philosophy* (third edition), 85–86.

⁷⁴ Cf. *CM* 98, 102–03.

⁷⁵ LS's interpretation of the *Memorabilia* can be found in *XS* 1–126.

⁷⁶ Cf. *PAW* 29, *SSTX* 502, and LS to Jacob Klein, August 7, 1939, in *GS*–3 575–76.